



INDUSTRY MENTORSHIP: MENTOR GUIDE FOR CV & COVER LETTER REVIEWS

Use this structured breakdown to help your mentee evaluate and refine their CV and cover letter. Instead of simply proofreading, use this guide to prompt discussion, draw out their hidden achievements, and show them how to translate built environment experience into clear, professional statements.

1. Initial Scan & First Impressions

Set a timer for 10 seconds and do a quick visual scan of the CV. This mirrors how a real recruiter or studio manager first looks at an application.

- **Layout & Structure:** Is the formatting consistent? Are headings distinct, margins balanced, and text easy to scan?
- **Length:** Does it fit comfortably onto 1 or 2 full pages without unnecessary whitespace or cramped blocks of text?
- **Contact Information:** Are professional details clear at the top (name, location/city region, professional email address, and LinkedIn profile link)?

2. Refining the CV Section by Section

Professional Summary

- **Current State:** Does it sound generic or AI-generated, or does it articulate their specific interest within the built environment (e.g., sustainable architecture, transport planning, community-led regeneration)?
- **Mentor Prompt:** *"If an employer reads only these three lines, what key message do you want them to remember about your interests and ambitions?"*
- **Action:** Help them swap out vague phrases for specific focus areas and key strengths built during the Academy.

Experience Breakdown: Work Experience, Live Projects & Related Professional Experience (eg PLACED Academy)

Break down their practical background across three distinct areas of experience:

- **Relevant Work Experience:**
 - Has the mentee clearly outlined formal work placements, internships, part-time jobs, or industry shadowing?
 - Focus on commercial awareness, time management, customer or client contact, and studio experience.

- **Live Project Experience:**
 - How well do they describe real-world brief challenges, live community engagements, site analysis, or consultations?
 - Highlight actual site constraints, real stakeholders involved, and tangible presentation outcomes.
- **Related Professional Experience (e.g. PLACED Academy):**
 - Are collaborative and design workshops, mentoring sessions, and Academy activities positioned professionally?
 - Emphasise industry mentorship and hands-on learning alongside peer collaboration and live project skills.
- **Action Verbs:** Ensure every bullet point starts with a strong action verb (*analysed, mapped, co-designed, presented, modelled, facilitated*).
- **The "So What?" Test:** Check if their project and work bullet points explain both the **action** and the **outcome**.
 - **Before:** "Made a physical model for the site."
 - **After:** "Co-designed and constructed a 1:200 scale physical model to present public space proposals to local urban planners."

Skills & Software Focus

- **Technical Skills:** Are software competencies (SketchUp, AutoCAD, Adobe Creative Cloud, etc.) and design methods (site analysis, hand sketching, model-making) clearly identified – If relevant.
- **Soft Skills:** Are transferable skills (public speaking, client presentation, team collaboration) backed up by context rather than just listed as standalone buzzwords?

Education & Qualifications

- **Relevance:** Are relevant subjects (Art, Design, Geography, Maths, Physics) listed clearly with dates and expected or achieved grades?

3. Dissecting the Cover Letter

Work through the four-paragraph formula together to ensure the letter tells a compelling story.

Simplified Version:

1. **THE HOOK:** Who you are, the role, and instant enthusiasm.
2. **WHY ME?:** Relevant industry experience, live projects & practical skills.
3. **WHY US?:** Specific company research, values, or schemes.
4. **CALL TO ACTION:** Professional sign-off and eagerness to interview.

- **Paragraph 1 (The Hook):** Does it name the specific placement, job, or course, and state immediately why they are reaching out?
- **Paragraph 2 (Built Environment Focus):** Does it link directly to a project or challenge from the PLACED Academy that proves their capability?
- **Paragraph 3 (Company Connection):** Has the mentee researched a specific building, masterplan, or social value initiative by the studio/company? Check that this paragraph cannot be copy-pasted to a competitor.
- **Paragraph 4 (Next Steps):** Is the closing polite, confident, and proactive?

4. Mentor Feedback & Action Plan

Conclude the session by filling out this summary together so your mentee leaves with a clear, prioritised to-do list.

Feedback Category	Key Observations & Examples
Top 2 Strengths	<i>Identify what is already working well (e.g., clear layout, strong project choices).</i>
Priority Refinements	<i>Highlight 1–2 key areas to fix (e.g., replacing weak verbs, tailoring the cover letter).</i>
Immediate Action Items	<i>Assign 3 concrete steps to complete before their next application.</i>