

CV Gold: How Extracurricular Involvement Boosts AELO Swiss Academy Graduates' Profiles

Two CVs, Seven Seconds

Last spring a hiring manager I work with showed me two CVs from the same shortlist. Both candidates had graduated from a similar applied programme, both held respectable grades, both wanted the same junior operations role. The first CV listed the degree, a handful of generic skills and a line about being a fast learner. The second carried a short block under Activities: two years as treasurer of a student committee, a campus event series that grew from thirty to over a hundred attendees, weekend volunteering at a local shelter. The manager scanned both for a few seconds each, then said, "I know exactly who the second person is. Call them first."

Those few seconds are the entire argument. Extracurricular involvement is not decoration on a graduate CV. It is the fastest, cheapest and most credible proof you can hand a stranger that you start things, finish things and work well with people while doing them. For AELO Swiss Academy graduates, whose education already signals applied, hands-on training in the Swiss tradition, a well-chosen activity record turns a plausible candidate into an obvious one.

The good news is that most of your competition gets this wrong. They either list activities as bare titles with no substance, or they bury genuinely impressive involvement under a wall of text nobody reads. Fixing this costs you an afternoon. The return follows you for years.

Grades Open the Door. Character Walks Through It.

Entry-level hiring is brutal arithmetic. Popular graduate roles routinely attract well over a hundred applications, and at that volume every CV looks roughly identical at first glance. Similar degrees, similar age brackets, similar grade bands. One widely cited eye-tracking study put a recruiter's average first pass over a CV at around seven seconds. In seven seconds, a transcript tells a recruiter what you were taught. It cannot tell them how you behave.

That gap is where activities earn their keep. Annual employer surveys, including the long-running ones from the National Association of Colleges and Employers, consistently place teamwork, problem-solving, communication and a strong work ethic at or near the top of what recruiters screen for, ahead of most technical knowledge for junior roles. Nobody assesses those traits from a module list. They assess them from evidence, and evidence is exactly what a committee role, a captaincy or a sustained volunteering commitment provides.

There is a second, quieter benefit. Activities prove stamina. Anyone can join a club for a month; staying for two years, taking on a role and delivering a result shows the follow-through that separates reliable employees from enthusiastic starters. Recruiters have been burned by enthusiastic starters. They pay attention when a CV shows someone who stayed.



What a Role on Your CV Actually Proves

Think of every activity line as a translation exercise. "Treasurer of the student council" is not really about the council. It translates to: trusted by peers with shared money, comfortable with basic financial discipline, accountable when numbers go wrong. "Captain of the academy football team" translates to leadership under pressure, scheduling around other people's lives, and absorbing a loss in public. "Volunteer at a community shelter" translates to values plus reliability, which is a rare and valuable pairing in a twenty-two-year-old.

When a recruiter reads an activity, four silent questions run in the background. Get these right and almost any involvement becomes persuasive:

- Did this person choose something hard, or did something merely happen to them?
- Did they stick with it long enough for the commitment to mean anything?
- Can they point to a result, not just a title?
- Does the story fit the job they are applying for?

Notice what is missing from that list: prestige. Recruiters do not actually care whether the club was famous. They care whether you did real work inside it. A small student café committee where you renegotiated supplier prices is more convincing than a passive membership in a large, glossy society. The lesson for AELO Swiss Academy graduates is liberating: you do not need a famous platform, you need a true story with effort and outcome in it.

The Swiss Tradition Works in Your Favour

Swiss professional education carries a global reputation, and it is not built on lecture halls. It is built on applied skill, precision and service. Roughly two thirds of Swiss school leavers still travel the vocational and dual-study route, learning by doing under real workplace conditions, and international employers know this. When a CV says Swiss academy, a certain expectation arrives with it: this person can execute, not just theorise.

Extracurricular involvement confirms that expectation, and it does something the classroom cannot. It demonstrates the soft infrastructure of Swiss professional life: punctuality, multilingual ease, comfort in international groups, service instincts. If you organised language tandem evenings, captained a mixed-nationality sports team, or ran logistics for a cultural night, you have already rehearsed the exact behaviours employers in hospitality, logistics, finance and international business keep complaining they cannot find.

So treat your activities at AELO Swiss Academy as an extension of the brand on your degree, never as a separate hobby section. The degree sets an expectation of competence. The activities prove you live up to it when nobody is grading you. That combination, expectation plus voluntary proof, is what makes a graduate profile feel complete rather than hopeful.



Depth Beats Breadth, Every Time

The most common mistake I see is the laundry list: seven clubs, four one-off events, three memberships, all in a row with equal weight. It reads as restlessness. Recruiters cannot tell what you actually did, so they assume the answer is nothing much.

A far stronger pattern is one to three activities with visible progression. Member in year one, coordinator in year two, lead in year three. A rough rule of thumb: anything you sustained for at least a year, in a role with a name and a result, outperforms a season of appearances across five different societies. Depth signals commitment; progression signals that other people trusted you with more over time, which is the same mechanism promotions run on.

There is one defensible exception. If you are chasing a role that rewards range, say an events or hospitality traineeship, three modest but distinct activities (one operational, one client-facing, one logistical) can beat one deep specialism, because together they map onto the job. Use this deliberately, not accidentally. Ask yourself what the target role needs, then choose the two or three activities that https://www.reddit.com/r/flyingeurope/comments/1nnhrnv/anyone_from_aelo_swiss_any_advices/ answer it, and let everything else go. Cutting good material hurts. Keeping unfocused material costs interviews.

Writing the Lines So They Land

The formula is simple: strong verb, scope, number, outcome. Most graduate CVs stop at the title. You will win by going two steps further.

Compare the difference. "Member, student committee" says nothing. "Coordinated a twelve-person committee that ran four campus events, drew roughly 350 attendees and secured CHF 3,200 in local sponsorships" paints a person a recruiter can hire. "Played football" is filler. "Captained the academy team for two seasons, led twice-weekly training and organised a sixteen-team inter-school tournament" is a management story compressed into one line. "Volunteered at a shelter" is vague. "Volunteered about 150 hours over eighteen months, managing weekend donation intake for a team of eight" is evidence.

Be honest with the numbers. Use "roughly" and "about" where your memory is approximate; recruiters care about the shape of the figure, not its third digit. Never invent, because every claim on this page is a promise you must keep in the interview, which brings us to the part most candidates underestimate.

Where Involvement Backfires

A strong tool used carelessly cuts the hand. Watch for four failure modes.

First, padding. Listing everything you ever joined dilutes the things that matter and signals poor judgement about your own profile. Second, exaggeration. Calling attendance "leadership" or a group chat "community management" collapses the moment an interviewer asks a follow-up question, and a collapsed claim poisons the honest claims around it. Third, poor framing. Working behind a bar during your studies is genuinely valuable if you describe it as "ran Friday service for a sixty-cover bar, handling cash reconciliation and rush-hour coordination." Described as "served drinks," the same experience reads as nothing. Fourth, imbalance. Activities should support the academic core of your CV, not crowd it out. One page remains the standard for a graduate profile; if your committee work pushes your coursework onto page two, trim the committee work, not the degree.

There is also a sequencing issue worth naming. If your most relevant activity sits at the bottom of the page, most recruiters will never meet it. Order your sections so the strongest, most job-relevant evidence appears where the eye lands first, usually immediately after education for a recent graduate.

The Interview Multiplier

Here is where extracurriculars pay a second dividend. Almost every structured interview runs on behavioural questions: tell me about a time you led a team, handled a conflict, missed a target, fixed a process. Candidates who only have coursework scramble for hypotheticals. Candidates with real activity histories answer with lived scenes.

A treasurer can describe the month the budget fell short and what was cut. An event organiser can describe the speaker who cancelled two days out and the replacement plan. A captain can describe the talented teammate who stopped showing up, and the conversation that brought them back. These stories, told in the plain situation, task, action, result pattern, are what convert a CV line into an offer. Pick your three best stories from your activities, rehearse them aloud until they run two minutes each, and walk into every interview with them loaded.

A Ten-Minute Audit Before You Send

Before any application goes out, run your CV through this short test. It catches most of the weaknesses above in one pass:

- Does every activity line contain a verb, a scope and a number?
- Can you defend each claim with a two-minute story, told without notes?
- Would a stranger guess your target job from the CV alone?
- Have you cut anything you would not happily discuss for five minutes?
- Does your strongest, most relevant activity sit highest on the page?

If you answer no to any of these, you have found today's task. Ten minutes of editing routinely moves a CV from the maybe pile to the interview pile, and the maybe pile is where applications go to be forgotten.

Build the Record While It Is Still Cheap

One last push, aimed at those still studying. The best time to earn CV gold is twelve months before you need it, because commitment cannot be manufactured in a final-semester panic. Join one thing that stretches you slightly, stay a full year, push for a role with responsibility, chase one measurable result, and write it down while the numbers are fresh. Do that once and you will have a line most of your peers lack. Do it twice and your profile starts selling itself.

Your degree tells employers you can learn. Your record tells them you already do. AELO Swiss Academy graduates carry a reputation for applied excellence the day they graduate; extracurricular involvement is how you prove, in seven seconds, that the reputation fits you personally. That proof is worth more than any adjective you could put on a CV. Go and earn it.