

Covering Letters

Many applicants think of a covering letter as something which does little more than inform an employer that they are applying for a particular job and that their CV or application form is enclosed. It is actually much more than that if it is to be effective. Don't assume that an employer will take your interest and suitability for granted!

A covering letter is an integral part of your application (especially if you are making a speculative application) and it should complement your CV so that the two form a convincing whole. The only time when your covering letter might be fairly brief is when it accompanies an application form which has given you every opportunity to say why you are interested in the post and why you are suitable, but even then it will help to reiterate your enthusiasm and ability to do the job.

It might help to think of your CV as the document which records what you have done with your life to date, with an emphasis on what is relevant to a particular employer, and the letter as the document which *highlights* those relevant achievements and activities and makes the connection between what you have done in the past and the job you are now applying to do. Written well, the covering letter is an opportunity to convince an employer that you match the requirements of the post and are worth interviewing.

As with any part of your application, make sure you can answer the following questions before you start writing - and make sure that each letter is tailored to the demands of a particular job and employer.

- What kind of work are you actually applying for?
- Why are you interested in this type of work?
- How are you suitable for this position?
- Why are you interested in this particular opportunity?
- Why are you interested in this particular organisation?

Good covering letters are not necessarily difficult to write - and it might help to use the template on the next page as a framework and to look at the example given. Pick up our handout on *Speculative Applications* for guidance on seeking opportunities which aren't advertised.

As with any application, always keep a copy of your completed CV and covering letter so that, if successful, you can refer to them before interview.

➔ FAQs

Should I type or handwrite my covering letters?

Covering letters are usually typed/word processed, but do produce a handwritten letter if that is what the employer has asked for. Whether typed or handwritten, the paper should be the same as that used for your CV and should always be plain, never lined or patterned.

How long should my covering letters be?

Just as your CV should be no longer than two pages in length, aim to write a letter which is one or two pages long. Most will be around a page long but you will probably find that a handwritten letter is longer.

Someone has said I should explain the negative points in my application in my covering letter - is this a good idea?

Your covering letter can be a good place to address any weaknesses in your application - such as poor grades or a lack of work experience, but make sure you write about these issues in a positive manner.

Example:

Shortly before taking my Geography A Level I was involved in a minor road accident and suffered a broken wrist. I was determined not to miss the exam, but my performance was undoubtedly affected and the resulting D grade was a great disappointment and does not, I believe, reflect my ability in this subject. Thus, I do not have the 240 UCAS points normally required by your firm. Since then, however, I have achieved consistently good academic results and confidently expect to achieve a 2:1 in my degree.

Or

You will notice from my CV that, as a final year student, I cannot offer two years' experience relevant to this post. I believe, however, that my regular voluntary work with Oxfam has given me an understanding of the needs of the third sector, and particularly of the demands on those organisations working with children and young people. My varied work experience in the retail sector proves my ability not only to work effectively with a wide range of people but also to adapt quickly to new situations, and I am confident that I have the commitment and aptitude to transfer skills learnt in these different environments to the post.

If you are referring to a mistake you have made in the past, explain what you learnt from it.

Example:

Whilst I do not have the 210 UCAS points normally required by your firm, I believe that this reflects an immaturity in my late teens rather than my intellectual ability. Having just moved to a new school, I was keen to make friends and freely admit that I prioritised my social rather than my academic life. I deeply regret my reluctance at the time to accept how this might affect my future, but trust that my university results to date reflect the lessons learned and my commitment not only to my degree but also to a fulfilling career. As you will see from my CV, I still take part in social and extra curricular activities but believe that I can now demonstrate my ability to prioritise and focus and to manage my time effectively.

Covering Letter/Letter of Application Template

<Your address>
<Telephone number>
<Email>

<Recipient's Name>
<Job Title>
<Name of Organisation>
<Address>

<Date>

Dear <Dr, Mr, Mrs, Ms, Miss> <Family Name>,
(Do your research and avoid using 'Sir' or 'Madam' - phone the organisation if necessary to obtain a name.
Please note that 'Dear Tim Smith' and 'Dear Mr Tim Smith' are not correct forms of address)

<Position applied for and reference number (if applicable)>

Paragraph 1

Identify the job you are applying for, and how you found out about the job
Explain what other documents you are enclosing (eg CV or application form)

Paragraph 2 (may be divided into two paragraphs if you have a lot to note)

Explain why you are attracted both to this *type of work* and this *particular job* and why you are a suitable candidate

Draw attention to any relevant qualifications and/or experience you may have to provide evidence for your suitability, referring to your CV where necessary.

Highlight how you match selected criteria from the job description/person specification

Paragraph 3

Explain why you are attracted to this *particular organisation*

Show your knowledge of the company, its culture and ethos and how your competencies will be of benefit to the organisation - look at its website and research it on Nexis

www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/elecinfo/eiaz/#N

Paragraph 4 - close positively

Thank the employer for taking time to consider your application

Mention when you are available for interview (if applicable)

Take the opportunity, if appropriate, to address any anomalies in your application (eg poor grades) but be positive

Yours sincerely,
(only use 'Yours faithfully' if you have no option but to address the letter 'Dear Sir/Madam')

<signature>

<Your name>

Covering Letter/Letter of Application Example

16 Northgate Road
Aberystwyth
SY23 4EZ
Tel: 01970 123456
Email: xyz@emailaddress.com

Ms Katherine Burne-Jones
Human Resources Manager
UK Engineering Ltd
Eastgate Business Centre
Chester
CH1 2AP

10 September 2017

Dear Ms Burne-Jones,

10 Week Graduate Management Placement - Finance

Having seen your advertisement on the Careers Service website at Aberystwyth University, I would like to be considered for the above placement. I am currently in the second year of a BA (Hons) Management and Finance degree and enclose my CV for your consideration.

My degree programme has given me a good grounding in management principles, and I have developed a balanced appreciation of both the theoretical concepts and practical application of finance as well as an understanding of how finance interfaces with other aspects of business and management, whilst my elective modules (International Finance and Quantitative Methods) reflect my enthusiasm for the development of financial systems in a multi-currency world. Allied to this, my work experience with Brown and Black gave me an insight into practical administrative procedures and I was pleased to be able to contribute to the efficiency of the office by revising the partners' scheduling system - this, I understand, is still in place. Having developed my teamworking skills playing hockey for the University (2nd) squad I was then nominated, and elected, as club treasurer. Through this position of responsibility I have been liaising effectively with both the Students' Union and university finance officers. Membership of the Officer Training Corps entails a heavy time commitment but effective time management has allowed me to succeed in all aspects: meeting all module deadlines, achieving an average 2:1 in my course to date and taking on responsibility for organising the OTC's successful three peaks night hike over New Year.

Having developed a number of skills via a short placement with a local accountancy firm, I would now like to gain further commercial experience in an international environment. A placement with UK Engineering Ltd would offer a challenging and rewarding opportunity with a highly respected industry leader. Your recently announced expansion into the defence sector is of great interest and I am particularly keen to learn more about the financial and management challenges presented by these developments. I trust that I would be able to offer you the benefit of the skills and experiences I have gained to date, which will allow me to contribute effectively to your organisation .

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the post and my application in more detail and look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Thomas (Ms)
(Enc: CV)

Resources

➤ Careers Service Leaflets

CVs

Speculative Applications

Location and Contact Details

➤ Careers Service

Students' Union (next to the Union Shop)

Open Monday – Thursday 9 am – 5 pm and

Friday 9 am – 4 pm

Closed 1 pm – 2 pm

Tel: 01970 622378

E-mail: careers@aber.ac.uk

Careers Sessions

Experienced Advisers are available – you can 'drop in' with quick queries or to have your CV checked. Alternatively, you can book, or be referred on to, longer careers appointments to discuss things in more depth.

Drop in sessions (c.15 mins) are available on a first come, first served basis.

To book a longer appointment, come and see our front line staff or phone them on 01970 622378.

www.aber.ac.uk/careers/

This information can be made available in alternative formats.

Mae'r wybodaeth hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This information is available in Welsh.

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