

Covering Letters



University of the
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What is a Covering Letter?

A covering letter (or email) accompanies a CV, and whenever you send out a CV you should send a covering letter (or email) with it. The aim of a covering letter is to provide an introduction to your CV and showcase your main selling points in order to encourage an employer to read your CV in detail.

Basic requirements

A covering letter should:

- Be short – preferably no more than one side of A4.
- Be appropriately formatted – include your address in the top right hand corner of the letter, and the employer's address in the top left hand corner.
- Be dated – include the date under your address
- Be addressed to a named person if possible - 'Dear Mrs Smith' and signed off 'Yours Sincerely' or alternatively be addressed to 'Dear Sir / Madam' and signed off 'Yours Faithfully'

What should a Covering Letter for an advertised job include?

If you are sending your CV for an advertised job your covering letter should:

- Start by giving the reference number or job title of the job you're applying for, and state where you saw the advert.
- Show your motivation for applying for the job by stating why you are interested in it. You may wish to use some evidence from your previous work experience or studies.
- Highlight your particular selling points *in terms* of the job you are applying for. This means you should remind yourself what the employer is looking for *before* you write a covering letter. If they want someone with experience working with children and who has excellent communication skills then you would need to write a couple of paragraphs describing your experience in these areas.
- Finish your letter with a positive statement reiterating why you want the job, and tell the employer that you have attached your CV for their consideration.

What should a Covering Letter for a speculative application include?

A speculative application is when you write to a company about a job that isn't advertised. In your letter you are enquiring if there are likely to be any vacancies in the future. If you send a speculative



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application there is a risk that in a busy workplace it will be overlooked or not read. Therefore in a speculative application it is *critical* that your letter 'hooks' the reader by showing them why you want to work for the company and what you think you could offer them. Some tips for writing a speculative letter are:

- Ring the company in advance to find out the name of the correct person to send your letter to (this could be a recruiting manager or someone in HR or personnel). Addressing your letter to a named person increases the likelihood of it reaching someone who will read it.
- Keep your letter clear and concise.
- Start with a sentence that makes it clear that you are enquiring about the possibility of work.
- Do some research on the company and make sure you know where you may fit in their workforce. When you write the letter, explain what kind of role you are looking for, and where you think you could fit within the company (this may involve naming the department or the role you are seeking).
- Summarise what you could bring to the company / role. This may include focusing on your main achievements, skills, knowledge and experience that you think would appeal to the employer.
- Finish by saying you have attached your CV, and thank the employer for taking the time to read your letter.

What should a Covering Letter for work experience include?

Writing a covering letter seeking work experience is very much like writing a speculative letter, and you should follow the guidance above. The main difference is that you should make it clear in your opening paragraph what kind of experience you are seeking – i.e. one day? Two weeks? Longer? You should also make it clear *why* you want the experience – is it part of your course? Is it because you're interested in a career in the area and you want to get some first-hand experience? Is it because you want to develop a particular area of experience (e.g. administration, sales, marketing)?

Further Help and Resources

Information on this and other careers and employability topics can be found on the Careers and Employability Centre website: www.uhi.ac.uk/careers. You can also follow the centre on Facebook: www.facebook.com/UHICareers, and on Twitter: twitter.com/UHICareers.

Free confidential advice is available to all students on an HNC course or above via telephone, videoconference or email. Contact our advisers by clicking on 'speak to an adviser' on our website. This service is also available to graduates within two years of graduating from an HNC course or higher.

As well as general advice and guidance, our advisers can give you feedback on CVs, covering letters and application forms.

Example Covering Letters

Ms J Shearer
Manager
TalktoUs
82 High Street
Inverness
IV3 2TQ

8 High Street
Ardersier
IV2 7PJ
Tel: 07658432097

29/10/2013

Dear Ms Shearer,

I am writing to apply for the position of 'Mental Health Support Worker' (ref 4567), as advertised in the Inverness Courier. I was delighted to see this position advertised as I have been seeking employment in a mental health support role since graduating and I would love to work for such a well-respected organisation as TalktoUs.

I think I could bring a range of useful skills, knowledge and experience to this role. I have just completed a degree in Psychology at the University of the Highlands and Islands which has given me an excellent grounding in understanding human psychological processes including mental health disorders. Alongside my academic studies I have been volunteering at the Samaritans in Inverness, and this has helped me to develop first class listening and support skills for people suffering from a range of mental health difficulties. It is this experience that has really led me to pursuing a career in mental health support work.

In addition to my degree and my experience at the Samaritans, I have also worked as a relief Care Assistant, delivering personal care and practical support to elderly people. This role shows that I can work as part of a professional team in order to deliver effective support. In this job I have had experience of working alongside nurses, social workers and occupational therapists to deliver support to clients who often present with challenging behaviour. I have become adept at using skills to encourage and motivate service users in order to help them to help themselves. I have also learnt how to challenge service users where appropriate, and how to refer to other professionals if a service user has needs that are beyond my role.

I feel that this range of experience means that I am well equipped to work as a mental health support worker. I am particularly excited by the role at TalktoUs because of the focus of the organisation on helping those people with mild and moderate mental health difficulties but who are not already accessing mental health services. This focus resonates with my own personal drive – in the Samaritans I have learnt that there are lots of people who feel isolated and unsupported in their daily lives, and reaching out to these clients in order to provide early intervention and prevent problems escalating seems very important to me.

I have attached my CV for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Black

Michelle Black.

James Stevenson
Manager
The Accountants
Lerwick
Shetland
ZE1 6NH

3 Anderson Drive
Walls
Shetland
ZE2 9PH
Tel: 07880978643

15/06/2013

Dear Mr Stevenson,

I was delighted to see the position of 'Administration Assistant' advertised in the Shetland Times last week. I have recently completed a degree in Business and Management at Shetland College UHI and would relish the opportunity to join your team. I have enclosed my CV for your consideration.

My interest in this role stems from my experience of studying for my degree, during which time I have learnt about various aspects of the business environment including administration and management. I have also found that I have particularly enjoyed the modules on accountancy and finance, and this is what has inspired me to focus particularly on accountancy settings for my future career. The fact that a job has become available in such a prominent local accountancy firm as yourselves excites me, as I would love to be able to progress my career in my home area. I have lived in Shetland all my life and so the fact that I could stay here and use my local knowledge rather than having to move away is a fantastic opportunity

In terms of the skills I could bring to the role, I think my five years' experience as a cashier in Tesco's shows that I am reliable and hard-working and that I can work well as part of a team. In my work experience at Shetland Islands' Council I have demonstrated an aptitude for office work, and have gained experience in a range of administrative tasks including minute taking, photocopying, sorting out post, writing letters and managing sometimes competing demands of other team members. My supervisor during the last period of work experience provided feedback that commented on my 'ability to undertake tasks with minimal supervision efficiently and effectively' also saying that I was 'a pleasure to work with' – comments which I am very proud of! As an Administration Assistant at The Accountants I think I could build on my existing skills and experience and would love to become a valuable member of the organisation.

I do hope that you can consider my application.

Yours sincerely,

Joanna Wishart

Joanna Wishart

Mrs J Simpson
Head Teacher,
Thurso Primary School,
Thurso
KW14 6DE

6 Islands View Road
Thurso
KW14 3XP

Tel: 07569214156
13/11/12

Dear Mrs Simpson,

I am writing to enquire about the possibility of work experience at Thurso Primary School. I am currently in my second year of a degree in Child and Youth Studies at North Highland College UHI and I am intending to apply for teacher training next year. Getting some experience in a primary school would be invaluable in terms of helping me to prepare for applying for the course.

I am a responsible, hard-working individual with experience of working with young children in a childcare setting (having worked at Little Ones nursery for two year). I also have experience of bringing up my own children (now aged 13 and 15). This experience as well as my studies has given an understanding of issues such as child protection, as well as understanding how to communicate with, motivate and support children and young people.

Ideally I would like to observe lessons in action, so that I could see and learn from the teachers leading the classes. I would also be keen to help out in any way I could – for example by assisting with group work, individual support, classroom displays etc. Preferably I would be seeking regular experience (possibly one morning or afternoon a week to fit around my academic timetable) and I would be very pleased to discuss my availability with you to identify mutually convenient times.

I have attached my CV for your consideration. I would be very grateful if you were able to consider this request for work experience. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Donald MacDonald

Donald MacDonald