

Covering Letters

A CV or Application Form (AF) should never travel alone, it should always be accompanied by a covering letter/email. A covering letter/email is a means by which you can introduce yourself and highlight your suitability. It needs to be targeted to the specific position for which you are applying.

The covering letter/email is an essential part of your application technique as many employers place as much emphasis on it as they do on the CV or AF. If your covering letter/email is poor, employers may not even read your CV or AF.

General Points

Your letter or email, whether accompanied by a CV/AF or a speculative application, should, where possible, be sent to a named person. If necessary, ring and find out who this would be, and when you are on the telephone, ask some relevant questions about the company and the vacancy.

While your CV should link you to the area of work for which you are applying, the covering letter should link you to the particular job. It provides the opportunity to highlight the key things you can offer and to convey your enthusiasm for the job.

Content

Your address/contact details (top right), the date and then the name of the recipient and the company address (underneath, but on the left hand side). In a letter, on the line after the salutation (e.g. Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms/Sir/Madam...), you should have the subject in bold type e.g. Re: Vacancy for Trainee Investment Analyst—Ref No EQ214. For an email, this will go in the subject box.

Your letter/email should ideally start with something positive about the company e.g. As (name of company) has a well known reputation for, I would very much like to apply for the above position as advertised (state where vacancy seen), please find enclosed my Curriculum Vitae (or completed application form).

The next paragraph(s) should then contain details of the skills/knowledge/experience you have which are relevant to the post—this should be closely matched to the job/person specification. You can divide this in to short sections if need be, or you may have a brief section on your course and then a brief section on your previous employment. Remember to keep it brief and relevant to the company/position applied for.

Any letter should be a maximum of one page and should match your CV. An email should be one screen full only. If sending an e-mail, consider attaching a covering letter as a document. In the body of the e-mail, you can simply explain that you are attaching a letter and CV/AF. This can be helpful when your application is printed by the potential employer, as an attached letter can look more professional

Try not to repeat exactly what is on your CV/AF, but you may wish to draw the reader's attention to anything that is particularly important or relevant in your background. It needs to be lively and interesting in order to encourage the reader to look closely at it.

Speculative Letters/Emails

These are sent, with your CV, to companies where there is no advertised vacancy. Their purpose is to raise an employer's awareness and for you to discover if there are any suitable vacancies. Before compiling a speculative letter/email, it is advisable to research the company/position requested and to assess your suitability for the sorts of vacancies that they may have on offer. You would then be able to give evidence of your knowledge. and relevant skills.



EXAMPLE

Your Address
Date

Contact Name
Address

Dear

Re: Vacancy for Trainee Investment Analyst

I am writing in response to the post advertised in The Scotsman for a Trainee Investment Analyst with Hillier and Ferguson. I am presently in my final year of a Business Studies degree at Stirling University.

My interest in finance stems largely from the stock markets option I took last year. Working at ARPS last summer confirmed this interest and I now keep up to date with the financial press. I am extremely interested in working for Hillier and Ferguson after speaking to representatives from your company at the Careers Fair. The training scheme provides a broad insight into investment analysis.

I believe that I would be able to contribute to the success of your organisation for the following reasons: I have a relevant degree and successfully took a module in stock markets in my third year. My degree has enabled me to develop strong communication skills, an ability to work in a team and the capacity to work under pressure and meet deadlines. My work experience in bar work and waitressing has enabled me to work in situations of constant pressure, requiring energy and an ability to work with the public.

My experience of working with the stockbroker ARPS was really useful as it gave me insight into the nature of the work and has confirmed my enthusiasm and suitability for it.

As you can see from my CV, I have had a number of positions of responsibility and am ready to take on early responsibilities in a job.

I am available for interview at any time and am able to supply references.

Yours sincerely

Sources of Further Information / Help

Employability Skills Workshops –

The Career Development Centre offers a regular programme of workshops including CVs & Covering Letters – see www.careers.stir.ac.uk for details.

Careers Advisers:

Discuss your covering letter and work on any improvements to be made, available Mon-Fri from 10-4, year round.

Information room:

Video - AgCAS video ' Looking Good on Paper', available to view in the Information Room

The Ultimate CV Book – Martin Yate

Job hunting resource files

AGCAS 'Making Applications' booklet, also available to download from www.prospects.ac.uk

Online advice - Go to www.prospects.ac.uk.

All URLs are provided in good faith. The Career Development Centre is not responsible for the content of these external sites. Updated July 2008.