

# Graduate Career Services

The Graduate School and Division of Student Affairs

## Cover Letters

The purpose of a cover letter is multifaceted in that it provides a means to introduce yourself to the company, demonstrates fit between your skillset and the advertised position, and serves as an example of your written communication skills. Each cover letter should be tailored specifically to the opportunity that is being applied for and should serve as a complement to your resume. The challenge for those seeking an advanced degree is how to communicate your skills and expertise in a manner that facilitates company interest. The following will outline essential cover letter components and provide a paragraph-by-paragraph guide to creating content.

### Requirements and Tips:

- 8 ½ x 11 paper
- Typically, one page
- Address your letter to a particular person/recruiter whenever possible (otherwise use either "Dear Human Resources" or "Dear Hiring Manager" rather than "To whom it may concern")
- Be sure to customize every cover letter to the individual job and employing organization
- Go beyond your resume and the skills listed in the posting
- Always have someone proofread your cover letters before sending them out

**Reminder:** The purpose of the cover letter is to accentuate what you bring to the role and how you could potentially be an asset to the organization...NOT why you want the job.

### Opening paragraph:

This is your introduction paragraph – it should clearly state who you are and why you are writing this letter. Be sure to identify the opportunity you are applying for, how you were made aware of it, and any contacts from within the organization that may have referred you to the position. After your introduction, briefly touch upon why you are interested in the role and what makes you an excellent candidate. Drawing upon personal experiences, such as a conversation you've had with a current employee, is an excellent way to differentiate your interest in the company.

### Body paragraph(s):

The body of your cover letter enumerates why you are the best candidate for the job. You can do this by drawing upon your background, skills, character traits, and achievements. A successful cover letter answers the following questions:

- Why are you a good candidate?
- Why does your experience suit the role?
- What can you do for the employer?
- What related skills have you developed?

It is imperative to customize your responses to the questions above to explicitly address the requirements in the job description (e.g. for a posting that requires "strong communication skills," highlighting a teaching experience would be more beneficial than your technical skillset). Focus the body on the 1-2 primary aspects that uniquely and directly qualify you for the position rather than trying to cover your entire history.

### Conclusion paragraph:

To conclude your cover letter you will want to express interest in the process following the submission of your application. Indicate that you would like to further discuss your background in an interview. Identify the documents that are attached or included with your application (e.g. resume), and offer to provide any follow-up or additional information that may be required. Share both your e-mail address and phone number, and thank the reader for their time and interest. End your letter with a professional closing such as "Sincerely."