

Cover letters and marketing yourself

What makes a cover letter stand out?

Is it the professional clear communication; the relevant content; or the justification that you are the right candidate for the role? Or is it the unique story you have effectively been able to communicate in one page?

It is all of these.

What is a cover letter?

- A formal application to a listed vacancy
- An expression of interest (EOI) or marketing letter to outline your interest in a role or company with no listed vacancy or existing opportunity
- A combined introduction and response to selection criteria

How do I make my cover letter stand out?

It is important to understand how crucial it is to respond to the selection criteria and the core values and skills which align with the company/role you are applying for.

“ With our vacation students, we actually put about 5 qualifying questions in our ad and asked them to address them in the cover letter, and I'd say only 20 per cent of people actually did that.
- Michael, QGC ”

The Essentials

- One page only
- Professional, positive with a proactive tone
- Note position and company applying for
- Address your cover letter to the contact person or appropriate position title only
- Ensure you read the application clearly, and follow the steps listed. If you aren't sure, email/ phone the contact person, or ask a Careers Adviser.

Where should I highlight the important information?

Most applicants undervalue their personal skills/ attributes/experiences or not understand what employers may see valuable and often leave out valuable information in the cover letter and even résumé. Think about the last time you read a newspaper article. After the first 2 sentences, did you decide to continue reading or not? The first impression of your application is in the layout and introductory lines of your cover letter.

Inverted Pyramid Writing



Emailing your application

If your application is sent directly to an email address and not uploaded to an applicant account, always address it to who is listed as a contact person or whoever the email address belongs to. If there is no contact person listed, check the company website or telephone. Often the advert will not have a company listed, so choose a title that sounds appropriate such as 'Dear Hiring Manager, Management, Graduate Coordinator, Selection Panel;. Do not use 'Dir Sir/madam or To Whom It May Concern'. In the body of the email, copy and paste paragraph one from your cover letter; followed by "Please find my application attached for your perusal."

Researching an organisation for an application

Recruiters review large numbers of applicants. As a student or recent graduate, a recruiter will have specific expectations of skills, knowledge and attributes gained throughout university. Genuinely being interested in working in a specific role and company is a top sign to an employer that you may be an appropriate candidate. So how do you demonstrate that you are genuine?

Recruiters like to see evidence of your knowledge of their company in your cover letter, online responses/selection criteria, networking and interviews. Employers expect all applicants to have a well researched level of knowledge including values, missions and current projects - all of which is usually found on their website or through a link on the vacancy. Knowing more about the company and how it operates can give you the leading edge. Review;

- Values, Mission Statement, Current Projects
- History, previous projects
- Strategic Direction
- Future Projects
- Industry influencers

How could you fit in to this organisation? (Sample paragraph one)

1. Why are you interested in this type of role? (Think about why you chose this degree)
2. What do you specifically like about this industry that made you seek employment in it?
3. What is it about this company/role in particular that has made you apply for it?
Hints: Research - google articles, company history, values, stakeholders, strategy, achievements etc
4. Make it clear that you understand how the company was able to achieve 'X' (you can use knowledge gained from 3).
5. What skills, attributes or experience may be helpful to contribute or complement workers on X?

Note: Try to avoid selling personality traits such as hard working, determined and honest in your cover letter. These attributes are difficult to qualify or prove within a written document. You should focus on key skills you can bring to the organisation and how they will add value.

Looking for more help or clarification?

Speak to a Careers Adviser and attend a Résumé workshop - open to all UQ Students - which cover Cover Letter writing and are available all year round.

Register: studenthub.uq.edu.au > Events > Career and Job Assistance

For further details, please contact:

Careers Service

Student Employability Centre

careers@uq.edu.au

employability.uq.edu.au/find-a-job



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Cover letters and marketing yourself

Cover letter sample

Alex Smith
a.smith@uqconnect.edu.au
Mob: XXXX XXX XXX

17 March 20XX

Name of staff member or position title
Organisation Name
Address on two lines if it fits

Dear Name or Position Title,

Re: Position title of vacancy, reference no: (if available)

Paragraph 1:

Take the opportunity to **grab the employer's attention immediately** by outlining some experience, achievements or skills you may possess. In 1–2 sentences, state briefly why you are applying to work for this organisation and reference your experience and qualifications.

Paragraph 2:

Motivation for applying. The focus should be on why you want to work for the company and, in particular, in this role. If you are applying for a graduate program, it is especially important to outline your interest and understanding of the company due to the highly competitive application process. Putting it simply, in this paragraph, you are essentially outlining why you are interested in working for this organisation. This is crucial as an organisation is looking for an applicant who has the required technical skills, mature soft skills and values aligned with their own. (Tips on how to research the company and projects they may be involved in are on the previous page).

Paragraph 3:

You aren't just a fan; you are a contributor. Continue to demonstrate to the recruiter that you understand their vision and goals through outlining specific skills/attributes and experiences, which may complement and contribute to the organisational goals. What similarities do you have with the company culture and direction? What differences do you have that would complement them?

Paragraph 4:

Wrap it up as strongly as you started off. Everyone signs off differently. This last paragraph should be confident, concise and decisive. At a minimum, give the reader appreciation for their time reviewing your application, as well as reiterating your genuine interest in this role at their company. State if the employer requires any further information please don't hesitate to contact you.

Kind Regards,

Alex Smith