

# Guide to Creating a Cover Letter

UNSW Recruitment

Never Stand Still

Human Resources

The purpose of a cover letter is to effectively market your skills to help you gain an interview. An effective cover letter complements your CV and will help answer three main recruitment questions:

- “Can you do the job?” - focus on technical skills,
- “Will you do it?” - focus on personal skills and attributes, and
- “Will you fit in?” - focus on teamwork and “fit” with organisational culture.

**This checklist will help you assess and improve the effectiveness of your cover letters.**

## **Overall presentation**

- Letter is one page only
- Layout isn't cramped (*include plenty of white space and generous margins*)
- No long paragraphs have been used (*guideline: 6 lines max. per paragraph*)
- In summary, overall layout looks professional

## **Top section of your letter**

**Include:**

- Your address, preferred telephone contact number/s and e-mail address (*a professional e-mail address incorporating your name*)
- The date
- The recipient's correct title (Ms, Mr, Dr etc) with first name/initial and last name, job title and contact address
- A personalised greeting e.g. Dear Ms Robertson (*Tip: avoid Dear Sir/Madam or To whom it may concern if at all possible*)
- A subject line e.g. Re: Project Officer Vacancy (Ref: 4589NET),

## **Opening paragraph**

### **Why them?**

- Aim to spark a busy reader's attention and interest with your first paragraph
- Demonstrate that you have done some thorough background research (*don't just quote from the company's website*)
- Explain specifically what attracts you to the role and/or organisation and/or industry
- Use appropriate language – do not use SMS abbreviations, and do not use uncommon acronyms without explaining them

## **Middle section (one or two paragraphs)**

### **Why you?**

- Avoid trying to address all the selection criteria (*guideline: keep the focus of your middle paragraphs on the most critical three to five criteria*)
- Demonstrate your suitability for the role by providing specific examples outlining where you've previously shown relevant capabilities
- Keep to one theme per paragraph (*e.g. relevant experience, or relevant qualifications and knowledge*)
- Convince the reader why you are more worthy of an interview

## **Closing paragraph**

### **Summary and expectations**

- If there's space, summarise the key strengths and qualities that you offer
- Mention that your resume is attached
- Thank the reader for considering your application
- Request an interview or meeting e.g. "I look forward to the opportunity of an interview."

## **Language**

### **Ensure that you:**

- Convey genuine interest and enthusiasm for the opportunity, via the language and phrases you've used
- Thoroughly check all grammar and punctuation: use a good dictionary and people – don't rely solely on your word processing application's spell check function
- Use appropriate language – do not use SMS abbreviations, and do not use uncommon acronyms without explaining them