

IBMS ICA1:

Job Application Correspondence

Part 1: Cover letter

Word Count: 498

Part 2: Critique on provided cover letter

Word Count: 491

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Prof. Leia Skywalker
University of Edinburgh

Dear Prof. Leia Skywalker,

I am extremely interested in the advertised Tissue Repair PhD programme, as it offers cutting-edge, cross-disciplinary PhD training that perfectly fits my goal to be a tissue repair researcher.

As a fourth-year student of **Zhejiang University-University of Edinburgh Institute (ZJE)**, a joint institute of two internationally renowned universities, I am expected to graduate with a 2.1 honour degree of **BSc Biomedical Sciences** from Edinburgh and a Chinese equivalent from Zhejiang, which both satisfy the programme requirement in July 2021. Besides the excellent academic performance suggested by my high GPA, ZJE's **English-language education** not only improves my English level, making it satisfy the language requirement with my TOFEL scores, but has enabled my **research experiences in the US and the UK**.

How biomedical innovations help those in need motivated me to choose the degree, which has offered me insights into biomedicine where I discover my particular interest in tissue repair. The interest has triggered me to study tissue repair in three labs and achieved excellent performance in related courses including Infection and Inflammatory Disease, facilitating my career goal of being a tissue repair researcher. My **past research success at Edinburgh**, where my summer research at Prof. Shirley Manson's lab led to **my first-author paper published in 2019** about a new viral vector system using gene therapy for cystic fibrosis, also suggests my strong motivation and ability to continue research excellence in the future PhD programme.

Behind the publication is my persistent training of essential research skills. The summer research at NYU Medical School and Edinburgh has nurtured my molecular and cell biology skills ranging from cell culture to ChIP, which prepares me for most tissue repair studies. My computing skills enable my current project to study microbial antibiotic resistance, providing me with increasingly important data-driven insights into tissue repair. My **prior successful scholarship application** for summer research may also help me to be funded by China Scholarship Council and others possible funders for the programme. Learning through practice also facilitates a problem-solving mindset, which benefits my future research.

My extracurricular activities equip me with favourable transferrable skills. My leadership in the basketball team suggests my ability to coordinate teamwork in the lab. As the **Biochemical Society membership** allows me to communicate with various talented researchers, being **first place in Student Research Talk competition** proves my skills to effectively communicate with them. My outstanding performance in research, study and these activities also proves my strong ability of time management, which can help me to plan and implement research reasonably as a PhD candidate.

Therefore, my proven track of research excellence and diverse research-related skills should qualify me for the PhD position and make me a valuable asset to your programme. I will appreciate an opportunity to further discuss my research interest with you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jane Doe

Critique of the provided cover letter

Overall

The cover letter is well-structured, with all the essential parts of a typical cover letter, which includes 4 sections: the contact section, the employer address, the salutation, the main body, the closing, and the signature.

However, the author uses multiple fonts, including artistic fonts, in different sizes, which reduces the visual readability. Instead, one or two professional fonts, such as Arial and Times New Roman in the size of 11-14 points should be consistently used.

Also, there are four typos in the letter, including “Tissue” in the introduction, “damge” in the second paragraph, “interprsonal” in the transferrable skills section, “additionl” in the closing, which should be avoided.

Contact information

Essential contact information, including mail and email addresses and the phone number are stated in a brief, clear style. However, that the postal code should be moved to the address line, placed between Haining and China, to make it clearer that this is a postal code used within China to indicate the city of Haining. An extra blank space should be placed between the country code (+86) and the phone number (135848546) to avoid duplicating the country code when dialling.

Employer address & Salutation

It is good that they include the employer address with clear reference to the university. However, it is better to replace “to whom it may concern” with Prof. Leia Skywalker, as indicated in the programme advertisement. The date of application should be moved to somewhere between employer address to contact information.

Main body

It is highly impressive that the author exhibits his previous research experiences, all closely related to the PhD position. Mentioning skillsets and her academic publication also greatly strengthen the application.

However, although it is excellent to give specific examples of how the author's skills benefit her research experience, the author claims that her first-author paper results from the summer internship in Prof. Jessie Cornish's lab, which contradicts the description in the CV. Similarly, the author claims her enthusiasm for tissue repair is a result of her course choices, which cannot be supported by the courses listed in the CV. These could reduce the credibility of the application.

Although it is good to mention technical experience and transferrable skills, the author copies the "technical experience" and "transferrable skills" section from the CV, without necessary explanations.

Closing

In the closing, it is good to emphasise that the author has a good fit, yet a summary of the fit will be beneficial. Plus, the notion of Manchester is extremely inappropriate, as this is an Edinburgh application.

Missing content

Besides, further details in the CV can also be elaborated in the main body, including the degree, the language qualification, the Biochemical Society membership, the award from Student Research Talk competition, grant application, etc.

Personal motivation to apply for the programme is not well-explained, which could disadvantage the author when assessing whether the candidate is determined enough to finish the whole PhD training.