

CVs and covering letters



The Careers and Employability Service will support you throughout your course and after graduation

EmployableMe: Our innovative and fresh approach to careers and employability at the University of Huddersfield is about taking control of your own career planning – with support from your professionally qualified and experienced award winning careers team. Look out for the green EmployableME character around campus and particularly within the careers centre in Student Central.

MyCareer: MyCareer is the hub of everything you do within careers. From here you can access everything! Including:

- JobShop
- The Huddersfield Graduate Programme
- Careers events on campus
- Resources

You can access MyCareer through the Student Hub via the Jobs and Careers tab.

Career Resources: The Careers and Employability Service provides you with access to personalised career resources. You can create a CV, listen to experts discussing job interviews, explore career options and test your skills through online assessments before facing the real thing.

You will be able to find:

- CV Builder
- Interview training
- Preparation for assessment centres
- Practice psychometric tests
- Short videos to help you with applications

You can access these resources from your MyCareer platform.

Grad Jobs Bureau: The Careers and Employability Service is here to help you with your future; whether that be moving into a graduate job, exploring postgraduate study options or training for a particular career. We continue to support you after you have finished your course to aid your transition from final year student, to graduate of the University of Huddersfield.

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Introduction:

Your CV is often the first impression that an employer has of you and it is therefore vital to make sure that it represents you at your best.

Just as every job vacancy is different, your CV needs to change with each application and use. For this reason it needs to be customised for each position for which you apply. It is not a good idea to have a 'standard' or 'generic' CV.

There are different common styles of CV that include:

- Traditional reverse chronological: where your most recent study or experience is highlighted.
- Skills based: this style focuses on the range of skills that you have acquired throughout your academic, work and personal experience.
- Part time: a basic CV containing only your most relevant details.
- Academic CV: very detailed, this style is used only to apply for University / research posts.
- Sector specific: certain careers might need more or less information than others. This is particularly true when prospective employers want to know about your professional registration e.g. in nursing, accountancy, law and medicine.
- Creative: if you have an artistic flair and want to apply for jobs where design skills are sought then a creative CV could highlight your artistic ability.
- International CVs: whilst guidelines on CV content and appearance can transcend cultural boundaries there are plenty of variations between preferred CV styles across the globe. We can't cover all of these here; if you intend to apply abroad start your research on different working customs at www.prospects.ac.uk

Before you begin:

If you have never written a CV before, or if it is the first time you've adapted one for UK employers, then it is worth using the MyCareer site within Student Portal on your University of Huddersfield campus computer as this will allow you to start from scratch.

Identify your skills and abilities

You need to be clear about what you have to offer an employer.

To start, create a detailed list of your experience, skills, personal qualities and achievements. Consider your employment and work experience, academic skills, study, training and personal life. We cover this area in greater depth within our Career Planning booklet.

Think about your transferable skills, these are the skills that you can apply to any role no matter what the sector of employment is. For example, communication; teamwork; analytical thinking and problem-solving skills; planning and organising and formulate examples using a structure such as the STAR format.

This provides a useful model when articulating your skills and providing evidence.

S = Situation
T = Task
A = Action
R = Results

The STAR technique works best when you use language to show that you were at the heart of the example that you use. For this reason it's always a good idea to practice using STAR. Try to use words that show 'what I did' rather than describing 'what everyone else did'.

Keep a general record of these in your own personal files, keep it up to date and refer to it each time you update your CV, cover letter and attend job interviews.

Tailor your CV and cover letter to the role

Employers' requirements and vacancy descriptions are rarely the same. If your CV does not match what they are looking for you will not be considered. Rather than sending out 100s of the same CV, submit fewer but make them well researched and tailored to clearly demonstrate how you match the role.

Do your research before you apply

Researching the roles, organisations and sectors that you are interested in will help you to understand what employers are looking for in a prospective employee. It will also ensure that you can clearly explain to an employer why you wish to work for them. You have the opportunity to do this on your covering letter.

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Give yourself plenty of time

Don't miss the closing date! Wherever possible don't leave submitting your CV/application form until the last minute, demonstrate that you can meet deadlines in plenty of time. Also check 'method of application': do you need to post or email your details?

A word about design

Whatever structure you use ensure that there is enough 'white space' around the text to make sure that your key facts stand out to the reader. If you're emailing your CV be aware that it could be printed out, forwarded and cut/pasted in a manner that you might not expect: you can't cover all eventualities but you can consider how size and definition might affect the impact of your CV on the viewer.

Lying on your CV

A CV is a document designed to market yourself to a prospective employer and you want it to show you at your best. You might think that a fib or two might make you more employable. But where does harmless exaggeration end and outright deception begin? Tempting though it can sometimes be to distort the truth, it's never okay to lie on your CV.

There can be many aspects of your life that you might wish to conceal such as:

- Poor exam results / resits
- Reasons for leaving previous employment
- Low salaries, in the hope of securing a higher wage in a future job
- Personal circumstances
- Periods of unemployment

Employment law supports the employer in that if you are found to have been lying on an application form it can lead to instant dismissal. Presenting information about yourself can require skill and if you do have anything you wish to modify, talk to a careers adviser.

A CV is not only a summary of your qualifications and experience, but is also a means of marketing yourself. There is no 'standard' CV structure and so you are able to tailor the document to suit the vacancy. Also, not all sections in a CV are compulsory and so you should choose to include information and sections that best highlight your key strengths that are relevant to the role.

Each CV you write could look very different. For this reason it is advisable not to use CV wizards or templates to create a generic CV.

Format/layout

- There are two main styles of a CV, reverse chronological and skills based. See the example CVs later within this booklet. However the information included within this section is relevant to both styles. Please also note that creative CVs can differ altogether.
- Employers will skim read – make it easy for them to find the relevant information by using bullet points and a clear structure. Research has shown that employers scan CVs and so having your key information within the top half of the first page is crucial.
- For most purposes, keep to 2 sides of A4. If you are finding this difficult, summarise information and think about what is most relevant to the position you are applying for. Clear exceptions to the two page rule include:

- 1) using one page for a part time job, work experience opportunity or a placement
 - 2) writing four or five pages for an academic role that requests detail of your research and publication history
 - 3) a creative CV where the impact you make is through the design.
- Check spelling, punctuation and grammar – beware of americanised spellings such as 'organize' and 'color' – set your spell check to 'English UK'.
 - Ensure font size and type are consistent throughout. Arial font size 12 is standard but not essential.
 - Keep it simple, don't overuse bold and underlining. If you're writing a creative CV ensure that the design does not hinder the text.
 - Use good quality paper if printing a copy.
 - Make sure that the most important and relevant information comes first under each section heading.
 - Print off a copy of your CV before you send it electronically and ensure formatting and margins are ok.
 - If you send your CV in an electronic format e.g. as a PDF or Word document, always check that it opens.

Personal details

- Keep personal details to a minimum: all that is required is your name, one phone number, one postal address and an email address.
- Use a simple but business like e-mail address and a formal answer phone message, not for example, lazydaisy@hotmail.com
- If you have your own employment related blog or website then include these details. Include social networking links such as your LinkedIn profile but ensure that you're happy for an employer to see them.

Personal profile

- Include a personal / career profile - three or four sentences summarising who you are (student or graduate of what subject area), what you have to offer (relevant skills and experience) and what you're looking for.
- Focus on what you can do for them not what they can do for you.

Content

- Make it relevant - tailor each CV to the jobs you are applying for. If applying for a vacancy ensure that you have addressed the job specification criteria and make it clear why you are a suitable match for the job by showing that you know what the role consists of and what would be expected of you.
- Give evidence and examples - just declaring that you have certain skills will not impress employers. They want to see evidence and examples of what you have done, preferably with tangible results.
- Use third person so every sentence does not start with 'I' - for example: 'Completed tasks', 'Gained a first class honours degree'.
- Don't assume the employer will know what you mean. If you do not impress them on paper then you won't even make it to the interview stage. If you have taken time out for a career break, e.g. to raise a family, then describe it as such.

Education

- Most recent education comes first. You can include relevant areas of study and brief details about your dissertation.
- Summarise GCSEs, give more detail for more recent and relevant qualifications.

Experience

- Stay clear of only listing tasks done in a role e.g. operating a till, serving customers, instead include skills developed whilst completing these tasks.
- Ensure that you give examples of what you did and what skills you used or developed - try to relate these to the role.
- Also include placements, voluntary or short term experiences and provide detail if they are relevant.
- On a reverse chronological CV - if you have relevant experience that is not your most recent experience then add a heading 'Relevant experience' at the top of your CV with a second heading further down your CV 'Other experience'.
- You don't need lots of detail about your experience : don't include the address, annual salary and 'reason for leaving' of every job you've ever held. Keep your employment history short, to the point and relevant.

Interests

- Your interests should ideally relate to the role you are applying to e.g. if you attend relevant conferences or subscribe to relevant journals.

If an interest is not directly relevant to the job you can include it on your CV if there is a measurable, application related outcome that you want to highlight e.g. "Interest: Running 5K races: demonstrates commitment, energy and determination to reach personal goals".

- Also include details of extra-curricular activities that are a little different and highlight your skills. Not just socialising with friends.
- Try and relate interests to the skills required in the role i.e. communication, problem solving, effective team working.

Skills

- If you have additional skills that you have not yet mentioned, include them under this heading e.g. competent user of Microsoft Office packages including Word and Excel.
- Also add language skills, if they are relevant.
- If you are creating a skills based CV ensure that the skills headings you choose are relevant to the role you are applying to. Don't choose headings such as teamwork, communication, IT skills if the employer specifically asks for you to demonstrate organisational, analytical, problem solving for example. This is a missed opportunity to demonstrate how you are a match to the role.

Referees

- Always check with your referees that it's okay to include their details.
- One of your referees should be an academic from the University (unless the application requests otherwise), and a second should be an employer or someone who can offer a character reference for you.

Things not to include on a CV:

For reasons of space, discretion, professionalism and good taste there are certain things that your CV should not include.

They are:

1. Date of birth / age
2. Weight / health
3. Religion
4. National insurance
5. Marital status / sexuality
6. Nationality
7. Gender
8. 'CV'
9. Passport number

Then there are less obvious points to consider not including:

- Photo: in the UK it's not professional to have your picture at the top of your CV; an exception could be its use within a creative CV.
- Multiple phone numbers: stick with one, preferably your mobile.
- Multiple addresses: if your term time accommodation tends to be flexible, use your most permanent address.
- Acronyms: it's fine to use really well known abbreviations such as BA, BSc or GCSE however beware of those that are industry specific or which are genuine but can be easily misconstrued.

In general CVs should be created using the guidelines above. However creative CVs are very different in that they celebrate your individuality and personality. In careers such as advertising, art and media your ability to communicate your original ideas can be as important to an employer as your qualifications, experience and background. A creative CV is one which need not follow any rules around structure, content or even format – some creative CV's are made from materials other than paper.

We have plenty of examples of creative CV writing on our website if you're seeking inspiration.

If you're considering this approach do:

- Research your target employer carefully: not everyone appreciates an artistic attitude towards job seeking.
- If your design is dependent on colour for impact, check that it is still legible if printed as a low quality black and white image.
- Bear in mind that you can't simply copy a creative CV that you've seen on the internet: the point of this tactic is to be original and unique.
- Remember that creative CVs are a gamble; for every potential employer who understands your perspective there could be others who don't appreciate or understand your artistic style.

Applying in response to an advertisement

Be prepared to provide evidence by detailing examples to show how you match each of the job criteria listed in an advert or job specification. If you do not have directly relevant experience then provide examples of how you can demonstrate that you have the key skills required for the role. The same advice applies to anyone applying for further study. Course providers are looking for you to demonstrate an understanding and also enthusiasm for the subject and highlight any relevant prior learning, skills and/or experience.

Submitting your CV online

In theory this is straightforward – you spot an advert for a job on a website, click through to a page that asks for your details and you've applied.

In reality your CV might be read by computer software (see our notes about applicant tracking software) and it's worth pausing to consider the following:

- Take time to read the instructions: have you noticed any rules (e.g. give a reference for your most recent or current employer), formats (e.g. font, americanisation of dates), or closing dates?
- Keep a copy of anything you submit.

Continued on next page

Sharing your CV continued

- Check for acknowledgments: did you receive an email after the form was sent, or did the screen show a reference number? When/ how will you know the outcome?

Companies have timelines for recruitment and closing dates – if nothing is present there may be an ‘ongoing’ recruitment, in which case look for a phone number or email contact that you can use for follow up.

Storing your CV online

There are websites that ask you to upload your CV to a database for a non-specific job with the idea that they will send it to employers who might have vacancies. This is common practice on many job search websites e.g. Monster, Guardian and Reed. As a job seeker this system promises to do your searching for you claiming that it’ll match you against thousands of vacancies. In practice your CV becomes part of a huge database of potential applicants that companies charge employers a fee to use.

The CV you produce will need to be very factual to be applicable to a range of roles and employers. Make sure you keep track of CVs that you upload if you choose to use these systems and keep them regularly updated.

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS):

Applicant tracking systems are designed to read CVs and covering letters and research has shown that three quarters of submitted CVs are discarded by ATS for ‘using the wrong words’.

ATS can work in two ways: (1) you open a web dialogue box through an internet site and type onto a ‘web’ application form, or (2) you complete a standard form and email it to a company who then ‘scan’ the form through an ATS.

You won’t always know if one of your applications has been scrutinised through ATS but here are some clues:

- You’ve been asked to input your details online.
- You register interest in a job by completing an online form.
- You apply for a vacancy that appears to have several stages.
- You are emailed an automated reply.

Increasing your chances of making it through the initial stages can be boosted by considering these steps:

1. Have a strong CV tailored for each application. This won’t necessarily ‘beat the system’ but having confidence in your own application is valuable.
2. ATS likes to draw on your social network profiles so have accounts that you can share e.g. LinkedIn.
3. Research the skills and qualities that the company is looking for and use these key words in your application.

Sending your CV ‘speculatively’

A speculative approach involves sending your CV and cover letter to employers of interest even though they may not have jobs advertised. For this to be effective, you will need a careful and well researched approach.

- Do your research into the organisation you are applying to, to find out what they do, what type of roles could be available, how they operate and what type of skills and experience they will be looking for. Use as many different information resources as you can – think of LinkedIn, newspapers, online sites, blog posts and graduate websites.

- Having a named person to whom you can send your CV will always beat one sent to ‘Personnel’ or ‘HR’. Think about your network from any work experience or placements that you’ve had, or do your research on a company’s website to find the appropriate person to direct your CV towards. Alternatively you can ask for a contact directly by emailing or telephoning the company.
- Use the occupational profiles on the Graduate Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk - these outline typical activities carried out in a variety of roles including, skills, experience and training required. Use this information to tailor your CV to similar roles. There are also pages of links to professional bodies and journals.
- Look at job advertisements for similar roles - these will give you an idea of what employers are looking for in a particular sector / role.
- Once it has been sent wait at least two weeks and then contact the organisation and ask to speak with the person to whom you addressed your documents. Alternatively you can state a timeframe for further action and follow up within your cover letter.

Example CVs

There is no such thing as the 'perfect CV' that fits all situations because candidates, companies, vacancies and recruiters all differ. We've included three CV examples to demonstrate how one candidate, Sophie Dexter, has used a number of templates to create a variety of approaches to employers. Try to use the examples for inspiration rather than unquestioningly copying the structure. Note too that:

- The emphasis of a CV can be changed dramatically by altering the order in which the information appears and by using different descriptive headings.
- You can compile different CVs using different layouts to see which best reflects your skills, abilities, and experience to date, to demonstrate you are a match to the requirements of the company/position.

CV 1 Traditional, reverse chronological CV

This style focuses the reader's attention on the most recent information, which is usually the most significant for graduates.

Sophie's intended audience here is quite general but focused on the marketing industry, and so the CV has been designed to allow a prospective employer to read the opening few lines on the first page and immediately see that she:

- Is a graduate
- Has industry relevant experience
- Has strong, relevant skills
- Is seeking a general marketing role where she can use her languages.

The CV is written in a formal style and is rich in information.

CV 2 Skills based CV

A skills-based CV puts emphasis on the particular skills and experience needed for the job in question and backs them up with evidence.

The emphasis is placed on the skills, so the Experience and Education sections are restricted to the facts (dates, place, qualifications etc.) and detailed descriptions of duties and achievements needed for the job in question are included in the various Skills sections.

CV 3 A part time job CV

Within this CV Sophie has focused on the information that a prospective employer might need to know, including:

- An idea of the work areas that she will consider.
- Ideal shift times based around the hours that she isn't at University.
- Her key work related practical skills e.g. from bar and retail experience.
- Relevant 'other' skills such as possession of a driving licence.

This CV is bare on facts / detail and so Sophie might chose to email it to a Head office, post it to a prospective employer or even leave it at a shop whilst job hunting.

CV1

Sophie Dexter
14 Merton Road,
Huddersfield HD9 4GF
s.dexter@hud.ac.uk
01484 224 2224
LinkedIn : uk.linkedin.com/sophie2015

PERSONAL PROFILE

Marketing graduate with 12 months relevant work experience in Paris. Excellent communication and market research skills developed in an international company. Seeking a position in a marketing role with the opportunity to use language skills.

EDUCATION

2011- 2015 University of Huddersfield

BA(Hons) Marketing with French
Degree class: 2:1

Relevant modules

Marketing, Market Research, Human Resource Management, Consumer Behaviour, Public Relations Management

2013 12 month placement Marketing Assistant, DVL Francais, Paris

- Project managed small marketing campaigns
- Designed and delivered focus groups to research consumer demand
- Developed excellent business French in verbal and written form

2009-2011 New College, Huddersfield

3 'A' Levels - English (B), French (B), History (C)

2004-2009 Newsome High School, Huddersfield

8 GCSEs - grades A - C (including English and Maths)

EXPERIENCE

Summer 2013 Market Research Interviewer, Skellet & Raymond, London

- Developed excellent communication skills through conducting numerous market research interviews.
- IT skills - created new database to meet the needs of multi-users.
- Developed report writing skills presenting data to senior management.

Summer 2012 Retail Assistant, W H Smith, Leeds

- Developed excellent customer service skills when dealing with customers face to face and over the telephone.
- Used computerised stock control system.
- Worked as an effective member of the retail team to reach sales targets.

Sophie Dexter
 14 Merton Road,
 Huddersfield HD9 4GF
 s.dexter@hud.ac.uk
 01484 224 2224
 LinkedIn : uk.linkedin.com/sophie2015

INTERESTS

My interests demonstrate my enthusiasm for life and high levels of energy and commitment.

- Keen member of the University Canoe Society. President in second year. Organised social and sporting events including an inter-university competition for over 50 competitors.
- Love travelling and experiencing new cultures. Developed independence and planning skills through visiting most European countries, South America and Thailand.
- Enjoy healthy outdoor pursuits. Currently learning rock-climbing and caving with the University Outdoor Society.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- Computer literate – competent user of Microsoft Office packages. Recorded and analysed data for my final year project using Paradox.
- Fluent French. Some German and Spanish. Ability to learn languages quickly.
- Clean driving licence.

Professor James
 University of Huddersfield
 Business School
 LS1 2DL
 j.business@hudds.ac.uk
 0113 2000000

Business Raymond Brigg
 Managing Director
 Skellet and Raymond
 London
 WC2 4LR
 r.n.briggs@skr.co.uk
 0171 234 234

CAREER AIM

Management graduate, with fluent French and relevant work experience, looking to begin a career in Marketing or Market Research with an international organisation.

MY KEY SKILLS**Time Management**

In my time at Skellet & Raymond I scheduled an extensive series of market research interviews and organised the collation and recording of the data to ensure all relevant deadlines were met.

Creativity

My experience in a marketing consultancy allowed me to develop creative ways of working with target consumer groups. I designed innovative marketing campaigns and presented them to the senior management team.

Communication Skills

I am a natural communicator and am used to making presentations both inside and outside University.

Business Skills/Commercial Awareness

The course at Huddersfield provides a thorough grounding in marketing and management. My involvement with the Student Business Society has further increased my knowledge and commercial awareness.

EDUCATION**2011-2015 University of Huddersfield**

BA (Hons) International Marketing 2:1
 Including 12 month placement as a Marketing Assistant in Paris

2009-2011 New College, Huddersfield

3 'A' Levels - Maths (B), Politics (B), History (C)

2004-2009 Newsome High School, Huddersfield

8 GCSEs - grades A - C (including English and Maths)

EXPERIENCE

2013-2014 Marketing Assistant, DVL Francais, Paris

Summer 2013 Market Research Interviewer, Skellet and Raymond, London

Summer 2012 Retail Assistant, W H Smith, Leeds

Sophie Dexter
 14 Merton Road,
 Huddersfield HD9 4GF
 s.dexter@hud.ac.uk
 01484 224 2224
 LinkedIn : uk.linkedin.com/sophie2015

EMPLOYMENT-RELATED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- 12 month experience as a Marketing Assistant at an international consultancy in Paris. Project Managed small marketing campaigns and developed and delivered focus group activities to research consumer behaviour.
- Constructed a database in Paradox to handle data for final year project. Attended courses at the University Computing Centre in Word, Excel, Access, Paradox, and Powerpoint. Helped colleagues at Skellett & Raymond to design new database.
- Worked for 12 weeks in an international market research firm. Conducted market research interviews and inputted relevant data. Worked as project team member to assist in the analysis of data and the production and dissemination of reports.

INTERESTS

- Keen member of the University Canoe Society and President in my second year.
- Member of the Student Business Society. Participated in case studies and simulations by Arthur Andersen, Unilever and Mars.
- Have visited most European countries, South America and Thailand.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

- Computer literate, having taken courses at the University Computing Centre on databases, spreadsheets and word-processing.
- Able to learn languages quickly. Became sufficiently fluent in French to undertake a sandwich placement in Paris. Gained knowledge of German and Spanish through independent travel.
- Clean driving licence.

PROFILE

Reliable, full time student with retail experience seeking part time evening and weekend bar and shop based work.

EDUCATION

2011 - 2015 University of Huddersfield
 BA(Hons) Marketing with French - expected Degree class: 2:1
2009-2011 'A' Levels - English (B), French (B), History (C)
2004-2009 8 GCSEs grades A - C (including English and Maths)

EXPERIENCE

Summer 2014 Market Researcher, Skellett & Raymond, London

- Developed excellent communication skills through conducting numerous market research interviews.
- IT skills – created new database to meet the needs of multi-users.

Summer 2013 Retail Assistant, W H Smith, Leeds

- Dealt with customers face to face and over the telephone.
- Used computerised stock control system.
- Worked as an effective member of the team to reach sales targets.

Summer 2012 Bar Staff, The Star Tavern, Dewsbury

- Evening bar work in a busy town centre pub

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

- Computer literate – competent user of Microsoft Office packages.
- Fluent French. Some German and Spanish.
- Clean driving licence.

References: three are available on request.

Covering Letters

Covering letters are an aspect of job hunting with which many students and graduates are unfamiliar. Writing a formal, courteous letter is a good opportunity for you to show an employer your strengths, personality and crucially, the facts about you to make you stand out compared to other candidates.

If you are asked to email your CV, read the instructions carefully as they may request a formal cover letter attached as a separate document. All application related emails are best written as a cover letter i.e. make them professional, business-like and avoid slang or casual words like 'hi' or 'hey'.

There is no cover letter that can stand as the ultimate, 'best for every situation' letter; after all, just think of the wide number of diverse opportunities for which you might write one. Our template offers a strong structure – you can use it as a starting point but remember that the intention is to show your personality so don't overuse 'buzz' words; instead, use examples and highlight relevant achievements from your work and study.

Basic points to consider when writing your cover letter:

- A good cover letter is a standard business letter being short, well written and covers no more than one side of A4. As a formal letter you need to keep your language free of slang or jargon and instead focus on being straight forward, relaxed and confident. It's your chance to address an employer directly.
- The aim of the letter is to market yourself – look back at the original job advert which summarised the vacancy as you can reword this description in your letter. For example you could rewrite 'Innovative IT Graduate' to say 'During my degree I developed novel ways of programming' to imply the skill.
- Generic letters imply that you couldn't be bothered to tailor your message so always write one specifically for each vacancy.
- Try to find someone to whom the letter can be addressed – there will usually be a named person on a job advert. Don't write 'to whom it may concern'.
- Remember to use the correct grammar especially with 'Yours faithfully / sincerely'.

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Covering Letters continued

- Your letter should complement rather than copy your CV so don't simply replicate the CV content (e.g. 'I have received a 2.1 degree from The University of Huddersfield'). Instead, draw attention to facts (e.g. "My CV evidences the five years I have spent gaining experience and qualifications in this field".)
- Use any personal contacts that you've made through networking e.g. if you've spoken to a manager on the phone or if you've worked at the company for a placement, the letter is where you should highlight this contact.
- Ask for a second opinion. It can be easy to miss obvious mistakes so ask a careers adviser or someone you know to read what you've written; grammar and spelling need to be of an excellent standard.
- Don't send the same cover letter to more than one company. Employers can easily spot mail shot style applications or the use of copy and paste and they don't impress. You must personalise the letter for each application making it relevant to each organisation.

If you need more advice look at our website, use MyCareer and also the Graduate Prospects website where you can find both templates and examples to get you started.

Basic template for a cover letter

Your address

Their address
Date
Dear name of employer

Re: “Job Title” Ref: XXXX or Opportunities for “Job Title”

Introduction:

Say why you are writing: either a) in response to an advert in which case you say where and when you saw it or b) speculatively in which case you say what kind of job/experience you are hoping for. If you’ve received the name from a contact, you should mention them.

Why you match the vacancy:

Say why you should get this job: what appeals about the post and why you are suitable for it, drawing attention to the main skills, qualities and/or experience the job requires and how you match up to the requirements, with examples as evidence. Usually you will pick out your strengths and this will be in line with the information given in your (enclosed) CV or form. The job description and person specification will help with this.

Why you match the employer:

Focus on why this employer is the right one for you. By researching the company or organisation you will be able to identify the key positive features that make it stand out among competitors or similar agencies. Remember to focus on how you can fit in and help them rather than the benefits you’ll be getting (like pay or training.)

Personal notes:

You may have further strengths you’d like the employer to know about. Or you might wish to mention personal contacts that you have with the company, maybe as a result of networking, work experience, social media or even from your perspective as a customer of the company. This paragraph should aim for a personal touch that can be missing from a formal CV.

Conclusion:

Close with a polite and positive statement, including information about how you intend to follow up your letter and application, e.g. that you will contact them in a week/2 weeks/a month’s time to gain some feedback. This lets the employer know that you are keen to be proactive and happy to do the leg work rather than leaving it up to them to contact you.

Yours sincerely
The Applicant

Example of a cover letter

Sophie Dexter
14 Merton Road,
Huddersfield
HD9 4GF
07804776777
S.dexter90000@hudd.ac.uk
uk.linkedin.com/sophie2015

Mrs Kate Sheldon, HR Director
FireRite
45 Wakefield Drive
Marsden
Yorkshire
HY3 4BA

30 August 2015

Dear Mrs Sheldon

Re: “Graduate Trainee” Ref: FR42/14

I am writing in response to your vacancy for the above post placed on the University of Huddersfield’s JobShop.

My recent degree has given me a thorough grounding in marketing and management which are both listed as key requirements within the Trainee role job description and person specification. I am able to back up this academic learning with the practical experience that I gained in my placement at DVL Francais.

My interest in FireRite was sparked by your presentation at The University of Huddersfield’s Grad Jobs Fair last year when Liz Jones talked to students about her experience as one of your 2012 graduate management trainees. I was particularly impressed by the variety of projects that Liz described and as you can see from my enclosed CV I have recently developed and delivered customer focused research whilst on my marketing placement which I think will be particularly useful in the role at FireRite.

Through my LinkedIn connection with Liz I know that FireRite use the Paradox database software; this is another appealing aspect of your graduate role as I have made use of this software within my successful final year degree project.

I have enclosed my CV for your review and I am available for work immediately. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you wish to clarify any points; further information and recommendations are also available on my LinkedIn profile.

Yours sincerely
Sophie Dexter



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