

# Cover letters that count

Personal | Polished | Persuasive



A cover letter is your opportunity to make a strong first impression in a competitive job market. Where your resume is very factual and to the point, the cover letter is more personal. It is your chance to show that you understand the organisation, show a genuine interest in the advertised role and convince the employer to offer you an interview.

The letter should highlight your qualifications, skills, experience and enthusiasm for the position. Tailor each letter by addressing the skills and attributes the employer is seeking, reflecting your understanding of the organisation and the specific job requirements and creating a compelling case for why you're an ideal candidate.

## Cover letter structure

[insert your name]  
[insert your phone number]  
[insert your email address]  
[insert link to your LinkedIn (optional)]

[insert title and name of recipient – e.g. Mrs S Smith]  
[insert their position if known – e.g. Manager – Graduate Recruitment]  
[insert the organisation name – e.g. Queensland Health]  
[insert the organisation Suburb, State, Postcode]

[insert the date]

Dear [person's name e.g. Mrs. Smith, or "Hiring Manager" if unable to obtain name],

***Application for position of [insert name of role, location if relevant], Reference number [insert if given]***

### Introductory paragraph

Catch the recruiter's attention with a memorable first impression. Briefly introduce yourself, including your degree and any relevant academic achievements, extracurricular activities or work experience. Share something specific and meaningful about the organisation that genuinely resonates with you, such as their mission, values or a current initiative. Explain how this aligns with your experience, interests or goals. Aim for a tone that is professional, authentic and enthusiastic, while remaining humble. There is no need to start with "My name is ... and I'm writing to apply for the position of..." as this information is already included in your letter.

### Body paragraphs

Sell why you're a good match for the role and the organisation. Avoid simply repeating things that are already listed on your resume. Instead, use this space to expand on your most relevant experiences, and show how they have helped you build the knowledge and skills that set you up for success in the role. Aim to blend demonstrations of your technical skills with evidence of your transferable skills such as how you collaborate with others, manage your time or adapt to challenges.

Go back to your research about the role and organisation to help identify specific examples from your studies, work history or volunteering that best demonstrate your fit for this particular role in this particular organisation.

### Concluding paragraph

Finish your cover letter on a positive note by briefly reaffirming why you are a strong candidate. Thank the employer for considering your application and express your enthusiasm to discuss how you can contribute to their organisation. You can also mention any documents you have attached e.g. your resume, selection criteria, academic transcript or portfolio if relevant for the application. Keep this paragraph concise and confident.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

[careers@jcu.edu.au](mailto:careers@jcu.edu.au)

  JCU Careers

[www.jcu.edu.au/careers](http://www.jcu.edu.au/careers)

## Two Page Cover Letters

Some employers will specifically request a two page cover letter that goes into detail about your suitability for the role. You might consider one of the following approaches to expand the body of the letter:

- **Theory to practice:** Start with a paragraph about your academic foundation, then move onto how you've applied your learning in real-world settings such as your placements, an internship or paid employment.
- **Chronological:** Demonstrate your development and progression across a number of experiences over time.
- **Skills-based:** Dedicate each paragraph to a key skill or competency drawn from the job advertisement, selecting relevant evidence to demonstrate your match to the role.

Our [Stories with STAR Power](#) resource provides further guidance on how you could illustrate specific examples of your experience matched to the role.

## Speculative Cover Letters

A speculative cover letter is one that you write to proactively express interest in working for an employer rather than applying for an advertised job. This approach is also common among university students seeking placements or internships. The goal is to showcase your strengths and spark curiosity so that they think *"We need someone like this!"* The key is anticipating the skills and attributes the employer may be seeking in order to demonstrate your match for your desired position. If you are successful in capturing their interest, they may consider their capacity to expand their team or at least keep your application on file for future openings.

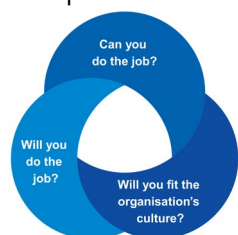
It is important to be explicit about the type of role you are pursuing (e.g. graduate accountant position), the nature of the role (e.g. part-time or full-time), your availability to commence and any other relevant factors such as geographic preferences if the employer has multiple locations. For letters seeking consideration for a university placement, include the duration and an overview of the learning and supervision requirements. Alternatively, you can attach these details to assist the employer in determining whether they have the capacity to support your request.

## Big Resume Cover Letter Generator

Get your draft started with [Big Resume's](#) AI-powered cover letter generator. Upload your resume and the job description to get a draft that aligns key words and phrases with Applicant Tracking System (ATS) criteria. Use this as a starting point to build from. Incorporate more personalised experiences, achievements and ensure the letter reflects your authentic voice. Create your Big Resume and Big Interview account using your JCU email.

## Top Tips

1. Rework your cover letter for every position. Employers expect the letter to speak to them, their goals and the role requirements. It is obvious to recruiters when an applicant has sent the same application to multiple employers. These applications are often the first to be dismissed. Aim to answer recruiters' three questions:



- **Can you do the job?** Demonstrate how you have developed and/or applied relevant technical skills and transferable skills through your training and experience.
- **Will you do the job?** Articulate your motivation and how the position aligns with your interests, goals and long-term career aspirations.
- **Will you fit the organisation's culture?** Highlight how your values and personal qualities complement the company's guiding principles and priorities.

2. Mirror the language from the job advertisement and role description to improve clarity and compatibility, especially if the employer is using an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) – a digital tool that scans applications for relevant terms to assist with the shortlisting process.
3. Address your cover letter to the recruiter or panel chair if you know their name, otherwise address the letter "Dear Hiring Manager", "Dear Selection Panel", "Dear Recruitment Team" or "To whom it may concern."
4. Your cover letter reflects your written communication skills and attention to detail. Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation and a clear structure. Ensure a professional look with a font such as Arial size 10 or 11.

## Seek expert support from the JCU Careers and Employability Team

Book your personalised one-on-one appointment for tailored assistance with written applications and preparing for interviews through our [CareerHub](#).

