

Cover Letter Guide with Examples

1. Overview

What are cover letters?

A cover letter is a one-page, tailored letter articulating one's suitability for a position in an organisation. It is submitted with a resume to further personalise your application by describing not only your experience and skills, but also your motivation for applying and how you would fit into the organisation's culture and share their values.

An effective cover letter complements a resume, helping to answer 3 key factors:

- **Can you do the job?** – Show you have the right knowledge, experience abilities and skills
- **Will you do the job?** – Show you are interested in the role and the organisation and that you have the other attitudes necessary for success
- **Will you fit in?** – Show how your values and goals match the organisation's values and goals. Your language and the evidence provide can also demonstrate how you might fit in with clients and co-workers

2. Steps to Writing an Effective Cover Letter

1. Analyse the job advertisement

Tailor your letter to the requirements of the organisation – do not send the same letter to every company. To prepare your letter, make notes on what the job's selection criteria are (i.e. the required technical and transferable skills, and personal attributes) and examples of how you meet them.

2. Find out as much as possible about the company and the role

Research the organisation's products and services, current/recent projects, new initiatives, awards or achievements, values and culture. Possible research sources include the internet, Factiva, industry magazines, the UNSW Careers Library and website, professional associations, newspapers, Information Interviews, publications and reports.

3. State your potential contribution to the organisation that will meet their needs

Organisations hire staff because they have a need that they want met or because the person has the potential to contribute something new. Identify what needs the organisation may have and/or how you could potentially contribute to their future success. Stating the job would be good for your career is not a strong argument.

4. Address your cover letter to a person

If the advertisement includes the name of someone to write to, make sure you spell that person's name correctly, use a formal greeting "Dear Ms Roberts" and use "Yours sincerely" to sign off.

For advertisements without a name, you should contact the company and ask for a name, however, be aware that some organisations will not tell you and, the conversation could turn into an impromptu interview.

If you cannot get the person's name, your greeting should be "Dear Sir / Madam or Dear Recruitment Manager or HR Manager" (not "To whom it may concern"), with "Yours faithfully" to sign off.

5. Grab and keep the reader's attention

First paragraph – state what attracts you to the company and/or industry and/or role.

Middle paragraphs – briefly outline how you meet the role's selection criteria by referring to your experience. Use relevant examples drawn from your work history, studies and/or extracurricular activities. Ensure that you address at least three to five key criteria.

Final paragraph – provide a summary, thank the reader, state your expectations e.g. "I look forward to the opportunity of an interview."

Use succinct sales pitch or marketing brochure language rather than the language you use for an essay. Describe the benefits you offer rather than lengthy explanations.

Fillers such as 'Most recently', 'In addition to those skills mentioned previously' and 'However' are unnecessary as the recruiter is most likely under strict time pressure.

6. Value your skills and experience

Phrases like "while I don't have...", and "although I have limited work experience,..." create the impression that you are not confident or proud of your achievements. It is important that you enthusiastically describe your skills and experience.

7. Format your letter effectively

It should be one page only. Allow plenty of white space at the left and right-hand margins. Use easy-to-read fonts such as Arial or Calibri in size 10.5 or 11 and keep the font and font size consistent between your resume and cover letter.

8. Check your spelling and grammar

Mistakes show poor attention to detail. Do not rely entirely on your word processor's spelling and grammar checker (especially with Australian vs. US spelling). Reading your letter aloud and showing your letter to others will help to improve the quality of your writing.

*Please note: Careers Consultants should not be used to edit your spelling and grammar!

9. Manage your time effectively

Writing a good cover letter can be time consuming, and application closing dates can fall around exam times or assignment due dates. When applying through an online portal or via e-mail, aim to send your application before the closing date. If you wait until the closing date and then encounter technical problems, your application may not be received in time. Also, some employers will begin interviewing as soon as they receive applications that meet their needs.



3. Cover Letter Structure

Your name
Address (optional)
Phone
Email

Date

Contact Person's Name
Contact Person's Position Title
Company Name
Company Address

Re: Name of position – Company Name

Dear Ms Jones or Dear HR Manager or Dear Recruitment Team (Only use Dear Sir/Madam if you are unable to find a name)

First paragraph

- Introduce yourself (summary of relevant qualifications and experience)
- Detail why you want that job and why you want to work for that company
- Highlight how you will meet their needs (what value can you bring? Do not focus on what you want)

Middle paragraphs

- Describe selected skills and knowledge through experiences undertaken and resulting achievements
 - Select the 3-5 most important based on the selection criteria and/or job description
- Each paragraph can describe an experience that showcases various skills; or
- Each paragraph can focus on a skill and describe the various experiences in which it was applied

Summary paragraph

- Tell them why you are the best fit for the company and how your skills will meet their needs
- Tip: you could summarise the 3 best things about you that make you most competitive for the job and how these things will allow you to make an impact / get results in the role

Closing paragraph

Thank them for considering your application and make a positive statement about discussing your application and the position further at an interview.

Yours sincerely (Yours faithfully if you do not have a name and have used Dear Sir/Madam)

Your name



4. Cover Letter Checklist

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

- Place a ✓ in the right column against all statements that you believe apply to your draft letter
- Where you have **not** ticked a box, consider if implementing the recommended checklist tips will help.

Letter is one page only	
Overall Presentation	<p>Layout is not cramped (include plenty of white space and generous margins)</p> <p>No long paragraphs have been used (guideline: 6 lines max. Per paragraph)</p> <p>In summary, overall layout looks professional</p>
TOP SECTION OF YOUR LETTER includes:	<p>Your contact information (Name, phone no., professional email, LinkedIn)</p> <p>The date</p> <p>The recipient's correct title (Ms, Mr, Dr etc.) with first name / initial and last name, job title and contact address</p> <p>A personalised, formal greeting e.g. Dear Ms Roberts (or Dear Sir / Madam or Dear HR Manager) (Avoid To whom it may concern)</p> <p>A subject line of the position e.g. Re: Project Officer Vacancy (Ref: X0504)</p> <p>Tip: do not use a subject line with speculative / unsolicited application letters</p>
OPENING PARAGRAPH Why Them?	<p>Aim to spark a busy reader's attention and interest with your first paragraph</p> <p>Demonstrate that you have done some thorough background research (do not just quote from the company's website)</p> <p>Explain your motivation for the role and/or organisation and/or industry</p>
MIDDLE SECTION (1 to 3 paragraphs) Why You?	<p>Avoid trying to address all the selection criteria (keep the focus of your middle paragraphs on the most critical three to five criteria)</p> <p>Demonstrate your suitability for the role by providing specific examples outlining where you have previously shown relevant capabilities</p> <p>Tip: use achievement statements for each of the above criteria</p> <p>Keep to one theme per paragraph (e.g. relevant experience, relevant qualifications and knowledge, or a specific skill)</p> <p>Convince the reader why you are worthy of an interview</p>
CLOSING PARAGRAPH Summary & Expectations	<p>If there is space, summarise the key strengths and qualities that you offer</p> <p>There is no need to mention that your resume is attached</p> <p>Thank the reader for considering your application</p> <p>Request an interview or meeting e.g. "I look forward to the opportunity of an interview/to hearing from you"</p>
LANGUAGE Ensure that you:	<p>Convey genuine interest and enthusiasm for the opportunity, via the language and phrases you have used</p> <p>Thoroughly check all grammar and punctuation: use a good dictionary and do not rely solely on the spell check function</p> <p>Use appropriate language – do not use SMS abbreviations, and do not use uncommon acronyms without explaining them</p> <p>The writing style should be appropriate to the industry, direct and succinct</p>



5. Types of Cover Letters

1. Responding to a Job Ad

This is the most common type of cover letter. It is important that the cover letter is tailored to the job requirements from the job ad and demonstrates your interest in working for that company or in that position.

- See Example 1 – Key Selling Points as opening paragraph
- See Example 2 – Motivational Statement as opening paragraph

2. Approaching a Company

Approach cover letters are used to apply for positions that have not been advertised. There are three main situations that require an approach cover letter:

1. Example 3 – Speculative: where there has been no prior contact with the organisation
2. Example 4 – Follow up: after some form of contact you have been requested to send your resume
3. Example 5 – Referral: after a connection has referred you to apply for a position

6. Frequently Asked Questions

1. Should one copy and paste the cover letter into the email body for emailed applications?

No, unless it is specifically requested that you do so. Instead, you should:

- Write a short professional email explaining that your cover letter and resume are attached
- Briefly detail (preferably bullet points) 3-5 key selling points of why you are a suitable candidate.
- Encourage the employer to contact you should they have any questions.
- See Example 6 – Email text when sending an application

2. Is it ok to have a generic cover letter and change the name of the company for each application?

No. In student and graduate recruitment, cover letters are used by recruitment professionals to differentiate candidates with similar backgrounds and to assess their motivation for the job and for working with the company. It is therefore essential that your cover letter is tailored to each job to which you apply.

Cover letters for the same type of role in the same industry may be similar; however, it is still necessary to write a tailored cover letter that details your motivations for the job and the organisation as well as links your experience to the unique requirements of that position.

3. Is it OK to send a resume without a cover letter?

No. Your applications should always include a cover letter unless you have been specifically requested otherwise. Your cover letter should put your resume in context –highlighting your key selling points and detail things such as your motivation to work in the position and organisation which will not be found in your resume.

The quality of your cover letter will often make the difference between you and the other candidates when the decision of who to interview is being made.



4. Should I include salary history and/or expectations in my cover letter?

No - Leave the salary discussion until after you have been asked or when considering a job offer that has been made. Why? Because you can be eliminated at this stage if your salary expectations are considered too high or too low. If a job advertisement requests such information, write that your salary is negotiable and that you would be happy to discuss the issue during an interview.

5. Is it ok to just write about my experiences and achievements?

No. One of the most important things to include in your cover letter is a paragraph stating why you are interested in working with that company and in that job. This paragraph demonstrates your motivation which is often the deciding factor of whether you receive an interview or not.



7. Cover Letter Example 1 – Key selling points as opening paragraph

James Li
Kensington NSW 2031
0400 123 123
jamesli@gmail.com

2nd March 2021

Jane Jenkins
HR Manager - AMP
33 Pitt St, Sydney, NSW 2000

Re: AMP 2022 Graduate Program – Wealth Management

Dear Ms Jenkins,

I am a distinction average final year Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Finance) student at UNSW, Sydney and have completed an international Internship with KPMG. My strong interest in the finance industry is demonstrated by achieving a high distinction average across all Finance courses. With a consistent track record of success in part-time and extracurricular activities, I am confident that I have the required skills, knowledge and experience to be successful in the AMP Graduate Program.

To supplement my studies, earlier this year I successfully completed a two-month Internship in KPMG's Audit Division at their Shanghai Office. During this Internship, I was assigned to the manufacturing client industry group where I collected information from clients, performed analytical reviews, and assisted other team members to prepare financial statement reports. I liaised with a diverse range of internal stakeholders, clients, and the Big 4 banks to acquire audit evidence and write formal reports to my direct manager detailing the progress of the project.

Further to this experience, I have demonstrated a consistent track record of high achievement through my part-time work and extracurricular activities. Whilst working at the Macleay Hotel, I was promoted by the Hotel Manager to Site Supervisor within a 2-month period as a result of my high performance. In this role I developed strong leadership skills having trained and supervised more than 30 staff members from a range of cultural backgrounds.

Most recently, I have read with great interest the plans of AMP to form a funds management joint venture in China as part of a strategy to enhance AMP's presence in Asia. This new venture has attracted my attention to the Graduate Program as I am seeking an opportunity to apply my financial skills and knowledge whilst leveraging my cross-cultural and bilingual abilities. Following the completion of my degree, I would like to work as a Chartered Financial Analyst and develop a career in wealth management. I believe the AMP 2022 Graduate Program will set me on this path.

The combination of my motivation to work with AMP and my proven track record for high achievement in my studies, work and extracurricular activities make me a suitable candidate for the Wealth Management Graduate Program at AMP.

I look forward to the opportunity to further discuss with you this position as well as my academic, work and extracurricular achievements. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

James Li



8. Cover Letter Example 2 - Motivational statement as opening paragraph

James Li
Kensington NSW 2031
0400 123 123
jamesli@gmail.com

2nd March 2021

Jane Jenkins
HR Manager, AMP
33 Pitt St, Sydney, NSW 2000

Re: AMP 2022 Graduate Program – Wealth Management

Dear Ms Jenkins,

I have read with great interest the plans of AMP to form a funds management joint venture in China as part of a strategy to enhance AMP's presence in Asia. This new venture has attracted my attention to the Graduate Program as I am seeking an opportunity to utilise my Chinese background in applying my knowledge and skills at a leading company with a growing presence both in Australia and China.

I am a self-motivated distinction average final year Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Finance) student at UNSW, Sydney. My strong interest in the finance industry has been demonstrated through my high distinction average across all Finance courses. Following the completion of my degree, I would like to work as a Chartered Financial Analyst and develop a career in wealth management.

Earlier this year, I successfully completed a two-month Internship in KPMG's Audit Division at their Shanghai Office. During this Internship, I was assigned to the manufacturing client industry group where I collected information from clients, performed analytical reviews, and assisted other team members to prepare financial statement reports. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of engaging with a broad range of clients as well as working in a professional environment. Additionally, I was able to utilise my verbal and written communication skills by negotiating with clients and the Big 4 banks to acquire important audit evidence and writing formal reports to my direct manager detailing the progress of the project.

Further to this experience, I have demonstrated a consistent track record of high achievement through my part-time work and extracurricular activities. Whilst working at the Macleay Hotel, I was promoted by the Hotel Manager to Site Supervisor within a 2-month period as a result of my high performance. In this role I have developed strong leadership skills having trained and supervised more than 30 staff members from a range of cultural backgrounds.

Additionally, as a volunteer Fundraising Team Officer for UNSW "The Hub", I demonstrated strong teamwork skills as I worked effectively with other volunteers to design and organise four major events on campus. These events successfully raised more than \$5,000 for the Starlight Foundation.

The combination of my motivation to work with AMP and my proven track record for high achievement in my studies, work and extracurricular activities make me a suitable candidate for the Wealth Management Graduate Program at AMP.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

James Li



9. Cover Letter Example 3 – Speculative approach (cold approach)

James Li
Kensington NSW 2031
0400 123 123
jamesli@gmail.com

2nd March 2021

John Smith
Graduate Recruitment Officer
McGrathNicol
52 George St, Sydney, NSW 2000

Dear Mr Smith,

I am genuinely impressed with McGrathNicol's commitment to developing their staff through a continuous learning environment and the Innovation Program which empowers everyone at McGrathNicol with the opportunity to contribute new ideas and potentially shape the direction and success of the organisation. Whilst I understand that you may have already filled many of your graduate positions, I wanted to express my strong interest in working with and contributing to McGrathNicol.

I am a self-motivated distinction average final year Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Finance) student at UNSW, Sydney. I have also completed an international Internship with KPMG and demonstrated a consistent track record of success in part-time and extracurricular activities.

To supplement my studies, I have successfully completed a two-month Internship in KPMG's Audit Division at their Shanghai Office, earlier this year. During this Internship, I was assigned to the manufacturing client industry group where I collected information from clients, performed analytical reviews, and assisted other team members to prepare financial statement reports. I utilised my verbal and written communication skills by negotiating with a diverse range of internal stakeholders, clients and the Big 4 banks to acquire audit evidence and write formal reports to my direct manager detailing the progress of the project.

Further to this experience, I have demonstrated a consistent track record of high achievement through my part-time work and extracurricular activities. Whilst working at the Macleay Hotel, I was promoted by the Hotel Manager to Site Supervisor within a 2-month period as a result of my high performance. In this role I developed strong leadership skills having trained and supervised more than 30 staff members from a range of cultural backgrounds.

Additionally, as a volunteer Fundraising Team Officer for UNSW "The Hub", I demonstrated strong teamwork skills as I worked effectively with other volunteers to design and organise four major events on campus. These events successfully raised more than \$5,000 for the Starlight Foundation.

The combination of my strong interest to work with McGrathNicol and my proven track record for high achievement in my studies, work and extracurricular activities would enable me to make a strong contribution to McGrathNicol's on-going success.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application, I look forward to hearing from you to further discuss this opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

James Li



10. Cover Letter Example 4 – Follow-up approach

James Li
Kensington NSW 2031
0400 123 123
jamesli@gmail.com

2nd March 2021

John Smith
Graduate Recruitment Officer
McGrathNicol
52 George St, Sydney, NSW 2000

Re: McGrathNicol Graduate Opportunities

Dear Mr Smith,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me this morning about graduate opportunities with McGrathNicol. From our conversation, I was impressed with McGrathNicol's commitment to developing their staff through a continuous learning environment and the Innovation Program which empowers everyone at McGrathNicol with the opportunity to contribute new ideas and potentially shape the direction and success of the organisation. As discussed, I am enclosing a copy of my resume that outlines a proven track-record for high achievement in my studies, work and extracurricular activities.

I am a self-motivated distinction average final year Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Finance) student at the UNSW, Sydney. In addition to my degree, I have also completed an international Internship with KPMG and demonstrated a consistent track record of success in part-time and extracurricular activities.

To supplement my studies, I successfully completed a two-month Internship in KPMG's Audit Division at their Shanghai Office, earlier this year. During this Internship, I was assigned to the manufacturing client industry group where I collected information from clients, performed analytical reviews, and assisted other team members to prepare financial statement reports. I utilised my verbal and written communication skills by negotiating with a diverse range of internal stakeholders, clients and the Big 4 banks to acquire audit evidence and write formal reports to my direct manager detailing the progress of the project.

Further to this experience, I have demonstrated a consistent track record of high achievement through my part-time work and extracurricular activities. Whilst working at the Macleay Hotel, I was promoted by the Hotel Manager to Site Supervisor within a 2-month period as a result of my high performance. In this role I developed strong leadership skills having trained and supervised more than 30 staff members from a range of cultural backgrounds. Additionally, as a volunteer Fundraising Team Officer for UNSW "The Hub", I demonstrated strong teamwork skills as I worked effectively with other volunteers to design and organise four major events on campus. These events successfully raised more than \$5,000 for the Starlight Foundation.

The combination of my strong interest to work with McGrathNicol and my proven track record for high achievement in my studies, work and extracurricular activities would enable me to make a strong contribution to McGrathNicol's on-going success.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application, I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

James Li



11. Cover Letter Example 5 – Referral approach

James Li
Kensington NSW 2031
0400 123 123
jamesli@gmail.com

2nd March 2021

Denise Davies
Human Resource Officer
Smiths & Associates Accounting
111 Flinders St, Sydney, NSW 2000

Dear Ms Davies,

My university Lecturer, Chris Robinson, recommended that I contact you regarding a potential work opportunity as a Junior Accountant with Smiths & Associates Accounting.

I am a distinction average final year Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Finance) student at UNSW, Sydney and have completed an international Internship with KPMG. I have a consistent track record of success in part-time work and extracurricular activities and am confident that I have the required skills, knowledge and experience to make a positive contribution to Smiths & Associates Accounting. I feel the importance Smiths & Associates places on the value the development of strong personal relationships with clients can only truly be made in a small to medium sized firm such as yours.

To supplement my studies, I successfully completed a two-month Internship in KPMG's Audit Division at their Shanghai Office, earlier this year. During this Internship, I was assigned to the manufacturing client industry group where I collected information from clients, performed analytical reviews, and assisted other team members to prepare financial statement reports. I utilised my verbal and written communication skills by negotiating with a diverse range of internal stakeholders, clients and the Big 4 banks to acquire audit evidence and write formal reports to my direct manager detailing the progress of the project.

Further my experience at KPMG, I have demonstrated a consistent track record of high achievement through my part-time work and extracurricular activities. Whilst working at the Macleay Hotel, I was promoted by the Hotel Manager to Site Supervisor within a 2-month period as a result of my high performance. In this role I developed strong leadership skills having trained and supervised more than 30 staff members from a range of cultural backgrounds.

Additionally, as a volunteer Fundraising Team Officer for UNSW "The Hub", I demonstrated strong teamwork skills as I worked effectively with other volunteers to design and organise four major events on campus. These events successfully raised more than \$5,000 for the Starlight Foundation.

The combination of my strong interest to work with Smiths & Associates Accounting and my proven track record for high achievement in my studies, work and extracurricular activities would enable me to make a strong contribution to Smiths & Associates Accounting's on-going success.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

James Li



UNSW
SYDNEY

12. Cover Letter Example 6 – Email text when sending an application

To: john.smith@deloitte.com.au

Subject: Follow-up

Dear Mr Smith,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me this morning about graduate opportunities with Deloitte.

As discussed, I am enclosing a copy of my resume that outlines my proven track record for high achievement in my studies, work and extracurricular activities.

As you can see from my resume, I am a distinction average final year Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Finance) student at the University of New South Wales. In addition to my academic success, I have also:

- Completed internships with KPMG and the University of New South Wales Student Centre
- Demonstrated leadership potential as a Fundraising Team Officer and Hotel Team Leader
- Highly developed communication skills gained through several professional and part-time work experiences

If you have any questions regarding my experience, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

James Li

Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Finance)

University of New South Wales

M: 0400 123 123

E: jamesli@gmail.com

