JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY

Career Center

COVER LETTERS

Table of Contents

Before you Begin Writing…… 1

Structure of a Cover Letter……. 2

Sample Cover Letters…….4-8

Sample Letter of Inquiry…….. 9

JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY

Career Center

COVER LETTERS

Professional communication is an important aspect in the job and internship search process. Most applications now require a cover letter or allow you to upload additional documents as an option. When possible, it is always a good idea to submit a cover letter with the rest of your application materials. It gives you a chance to highlight your most relevant skills and experiences while showcasing your writing abilities. Here are some basic tips for drafting a cover letter.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN WRITING:

1. Be prepared to spend one to two hours creating your first cover letter.

2. Research the company or organization on the web.
    a. Read articles about the company
    b. Read the "about us" section of their website
    c. Find their mission, goals, and values as an organization
    d. Learn about their products and services
    e. Research the industry as a whole

3. Each cover letter should be tailored to the job or internship description (if you have a detailed one). In order to tailor your cover letter, make a chart. On one side, list the most important qualifications the employer is seeking in the job description. Re-read the job description and notice any key terms that are mentioned repeatedly. On the other side of your chart, write out how you meet each qualification. **If you do not have a detailed job description** you need to determine what the key qualifications are for entry-level opportunities in the field you are applying to. Whatever is in your chart should frame the content of your cover letter. Your chart may look something like this:

Example Qualifications	**Possible Experiences that Match**
Analytical Skills	-Relevant coursework -Relevant internships, research or in depth course projects
Knowledge of Field	-Relevant coursework -Internships -Student Organization -Alumni Networking/Career Exploration Events
Fluency in another language	-2 years of language courses -Study Abroad
Ability to build relationships with others	-Leadership role in a student organization -Relevant internship -Volunteer work
Leadership Potential	-Relevant student organization involvement -Group projects for relevant courses -Leadership role in an internship/job

4. Have your cover letter reviewed by a Peer Assistant or Career Counselor in the Career Center.

STRUCTURE OF A COVER LETTER:

A cover letter should be 3-5 paragraphs in length, and be no longer than one page. Notice everything is left justified and you do not need to indent your paragraphs. Remember to proofread for grammatical and spelling errors. The framework for your format may look something like this.

Your Address
Your Phone
Your Email

Today's Date

Contact Name (if you have it)
Organization Name
Organization Address
Organization Phone
Organization Email

You can also use Dear Ms., Mr., or Dr. when addressing the recipient.

Dear Full Name: (If you don't have it, use the position title)

Paragraph 1, Introduction:

This paragraph serves as your introduction to the employer. You also need to state your objective in writing the letter. Make sure when writing your objective that you include the job title, number (if given), department, and location just in case the organization has multiple openings with the same job title in various departments and locations. This paragraph should be no longer than 1-3 sentences. After stating your objective it is okay to introduce yourself and give an overview of your background. Look at some of the opening paragraphs in the sample cover letters included in this handout for ideas.

Body Paragraphs:

The body of your letter should be 2-3 paragraphs consisting of 3-5 sentences each. In your body section, you should begin by highlighting your most relevant education, experiences and skills. Don't just claim to match the job description, make sure that you are providing specific detailed examples about your skills and experience to show the employer how you meet the qualifications they are seeking. For example, don't say "I have excellent communication skills." Instead you could say, "I have proven communication skills. For example, as the Public Relations Officer for the Women's Pre-Health Leadership Society, I am responsible for conveying our organization's message to the campus community. This involves writing e-communications, updating our website, speaking at relevant campus engagements, and networking with university alumni to build relationships for our organization."

In the body of your cover letter, you also want to discuss why you are interested in the organization or that specific department within the organization. This is your chance to showcase all the research you have done about the employer. Try to show the employer how you will fit into the organization and ultimately benefit the work that they do. Review the examples to see how students have successfully incorporated information about the organization into their cover letters.

Paragraph 4, Closing:

The final paragraph of your letter should be between 1-3 sentences. Make sure you summarize again why you are a good fit for the organization. Thank the recipient for their time and consideration. Then request some form of action. That could be including a statement such as, "I look forward to discussing my questions further in an interview." If you have any specific instructions for the employer about how and when to contact you, this is the point in the letter where you should provide any specific instructions for contacting you.

Sincerely,

Your Full Name

SAMPLE COVER LETTERS:

Cover Letter Sample: Social Science Research Position

1234 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218

March 23rd, 2010

Ms. Ima Employer
Program Manager
Center for Advanced Defense Studies
1 A Street
Washington, DC 20002

Make sure you use a colon instead of a comma when addressing the recipient.

Dear Ms. Employer:

I am interested in applying for a Research internship with your organization, the announcement for which was forwarded to me by Ms. Dorothee Heisenberg of the International Studies Program here at Johns Hopkins University. After taking time to research your organization, I am intrigued by the wide breadth of topics on which your research focuses. Also, I find it very appealing that your organization not only researches the security problems of today and the defense issues of tomorrow, but is also dedicated to educating the appropriate audience and implementing novel approaches to promote global security. I have been searching for an opportunity to participate in an internship program this summer with either a think tank or a more action-oriented government organization. The Center for Advanced Defense Studies seems to offer the best of both worlds by providing opportunities for research and the implementation of that research.

My education has prepared me to be successful in your internship program. Through my coursework in the International Studies program as well as the History and Economics departments, I have developed a strong interest in the field of global security. In classes such as Contemporary International Politics and International Monetary Economics, I have learned how fragile a country's security can be and have studied some of the many factors that can contribute to a country's safety and stability. In a course I completed on International Law, I intensively studied the case of the League of Nations Mandate for South West Africa, and through this I learned how difficult it can be for a country to achieve security without cooperation between states and international organizations. In addition, as Managing Director of the Model U.N. program on campus, I developed leadership skills through organizing an annual conference for 150 participants. This involved creating and managing ten subcommittees of my peers.

Attached is my resume for your review. I have the desire and enthusiasm to make a difference in your organization. I welcome the opportunity for a personal meeting to discuss my qualifications. Please contact me should you have any questions regarding my candidacy. I will send you an e-mail in two weeks to ensure receipt of my materials. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Ima Student

Cover Letter Sample: Health Policy Full-time Position

1234 Alumni Terrace
Paris, France

March 15th, 2010

International Center for Research on Women
1120 20th St. N.W., Suite 500 North
Washington, D.C. 20036

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing in reference to your post on Idealist.org regarding an opening for a Program Assistant- Gender & HIV. I am currently working as a consultant for the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in the Women, Children and Gender Service, and see this opening as an excellent next step that would allow me to build on prior experience and pursue my passion for international development and women's issues.

I am impressed by and interested in ICRW's work, and excited to see that a number of your recent reports deal with the issues I have found most compelling during my time with WFP. My year with the WFP's Women, Children and Gender Service has given me a background in the challenges of mainstreaming gender in international development policy. A major part of my responsibilities in recent months has been researching and reporting on WFP's progress on gender mainstreaming over the past 15 years, analyzing sex-disaggregated data and policy evolution in preparation for the 15 year review of the Beijing Platform for Action. I am particularly interested in the impact of cultural taboos and prejudices on people's willingness to seek testing and care, and the way in which gender is reflected in these situations. ICRW's work combines many of the issues which I am most interested in researching, and I would welcome an opportunity to pursue them further as part of your team.

In addition to experience researching and analyzing gender in development, my varied experience has provided me with experience in diverse administrative, event planning and knowledge sharing tasks which would be useful as a Project Assistant at ICRW.

- As a consultant at WFP, I managed the Gender Service's transition to a new website and knowledge sharing system, identifying relevant materials, making updates as needed, and liaising with technical staff and the policy department representative.
- At WFP, I have helped organize events in Rome and Cairo, taking into account the logistical needs of attendees from across the globe and coordinating three UN agencies.
- As a campaign manager and as a consultant for American Group of Companies, I have organized and provided logistical support to conferences in the US and in Europe.

While I have had a wonderful experience with the World Food Programme (WFP), I am looking for an opportunity to take on more project management experience, and expand my skill set in the field. I look forward to further discussing this opportunity at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Ima Alumni

Cover Letter Sample: Biomedical Engineering Research Position

IMA BME STUDENT

1234 Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
111-111-1111 imabme@gmail.com

March 17th, 2010

Ima Recruiter
Stryker
123 Engineering Way
Kalamazoo, MI 49002

Dear Ms. Recruiter:

It is with great interest that I am forwarding my resume to you for the full-time research position at Stryker Endoscopy in California, especially after speaking with you on Wednesday at the Johns Hopkins University Career Fair. As I complete my B.S. in Biomedical Engineering, I hope to contribute my skills and experience to Stryker. This is an opportunity where I can fully apply my education, professional experiences, and personal interests.

My varied coursework has expanded my knowledge of mechanical and biological systems and enriched my skill sets in analyzing data and communicating that information. The most significant of these was the Biomedical Engineering Design Team course. Through this course, I have gained invaluable product development experience, from conception and designing to prototyping and testing. My design team and I developed a vestibular ocular reflex diagnostic device that can quantify degeneration in the vestibular ocular reflex that can lead to vertigo and sudden dizziness. For the design, I contributed to the safety analysis of the the device by proving that the degree to which the patient's head was being rotated was significantly below thresholds for injury and pain. In addition, I lead my team in doing market research and developing a business plan that would bring the device to market. We attended conferences and workshops across the nation to learn more about medical device development and even competed in several business competitions. By the end of my sophomore year, the prototype of the diagnostic device was sold to a company in Japan, with hopes of becoming the new golden standard for dizziness and vertigo testing.

In addition to my academic work, my professional experiences have significantly influenced my desire to work in the medical device industry, specifically at Stryker. During my time as an intern at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center, I used numerous medical devices and saw the immense impact they had on patients. My interest in medicine and engineering led to doctors and nurses explaining how the various devices worked and were utilized in different situations.

I am confident I will be a valuable asset to Stryker Endoscopy, bringing a unique combination of skills, professional and personal experiences, and passionate dedication. I look forward to hearing from you and having the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ima Student

Some students prefer a direct approach in their conclusion. You could easily edit this to read, "I look forward to discussing my qualifications in an interview."

Cover Letter Sample: Graduate Level Candidate, Consultant Position

Graduate Hopkins Student

123 Campus Way
Baltimore, MD 21218
(111)111-1111
gradstudent@gmail.com

November 10th, 2010

Summer Insight Program
McKinsey & Company
1200 19th St. NW
Washington, District of Columbia

Dear Summer Insight Program Selection Committee:

I am applying to the Summer Insight Program for PhD candidates at McKinsey & Company, which was posted on the APD website. I am a graduate student in the Department of Biology at Johns Hopkins University. My education and experience have prepared me for the Summer Insight program offered by McKinsey.

As a graduate student in a neuroscience laboratory, I have been trained to quickly learn new fields, think through problems in an analytical manner and maintain flexibility within a demanding schedule. My research involved recording sleep in mice, a method that I pioneered at Johns Hopkins. Once the technique was established within the lab, I was responsible for training other area scientists, both academic and industrial, in the technique and analysis. This skill set also allowed me to participate in collaborations with laboratories at Johns Hopkins and other institutions exploring topics such as Schizophrenia. I have written three primary manuscripts, three review articles and have been given the opportunity to present my work to both scientific and community audiences. These experiences have helped me to develop technical writing skills and the ability to present details of my research to various audiences, therefore preparing me for communication in a business environment.

In addition to developing my research and analytical skills as a graduate student, I have also had the opportunity to develop my organizational management skills. I established an animal research facility within the lab starting my second year of graduate school. I expanded the laboratory capabilities from the simultaneous analysis of 24 animals to nearly 200 animals and added many new behavioral paradigms to our labs protocols, such as sleep recording and cognitive assays in mice. Furthermore, I manage two student technicians who care for the animals within the facility.

While in graduate school, I learned of the consulting profession from John Richards, a Biology Department alumnus who now works at McKinsey. I am attracted to the constant problem solving that consulting offers and am enthusiastic about the idea of problem solving in teams to allow rapid development of ideas. Furthermore, I would love to start my career in business consulting in such a reputable firm. I would bring McKinsey both expertise in the fields of Neuroscience and Sleep biology, and the ability to think through larger problems in a group atmosphere and learn new information quickly.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any further questions, contact me at anytime via cell phone (443-845-3761).

Sincerely,

Ima Graduate Student

Cover Letter Sample: Edelman Public Relations Firm, Internship

1234 N. Charles Street, Apt. 1
Baltimore, MD 21218

July 15th, 2010

Ima Employer
Top Public Relations Firm
123 E. 53rd Street
New York, NY

Dear Ima Employer:

I am interested in applying for the Edelman Public Relations, New York Summer Internship Program. I am currently a junior at Johns Hopkins University majoring in Writing Seminars, where I am on the Dean's List for academic achievement.

For the past two summers, I have interned at a non-profit social and public advocacy group called CommunityED, which focuses on arts education and political literacy. Because of the small size of the organization, I had the opportunity to work closely with the Executive Director and Project Manager, and was entrusted with considerable responsibility with regard to confidential contracts and celebrity information. I am very comfortable working under deadlines with the need for perfection. Events must go off smoothly and press releases must be sent out without a single error; this urgency for exceptional work is something that I welcome. The skill sets I developed at CommunityED would be easily transferable to an agency such as Edelman.

Academically, I have been able to enhance my communication skills by constantly writing and editing many different types of papers. The most important skill in my academic work is the ability to write concisely. For a Writing Seminars major, another necessity is the ability to multitask and switch gears seamlessly. As an intern at Edelman, I could apply my ability to write effectively to convey information in exciting ways.

I became interested in an internship at Edelman while researching different New York-based public relations firms. Because your organization is a leader in the industry, I see no better place to gain an understanding of the field. I have a broad interest within the field of Public Relations and since Edelman holds positions in all of them, this internship will provide me the opportunity to see which areas would best fit my strengths.

Thank you for considering my application for the New York Summer Internship Program. Please contact me with any questions, or if there is any additional information I can provide.

Sincerely,

Ima Student

Letter of Inquiry Sample: Nonprofit/International Development Field

123 Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218

October 12, 2010

Mr. Richard Booth
Program Assistant
International Rescue Committee
12 K. Street
Washington, DC

Subj: Education Development Department Internship Opportunity

Dear Mr. Booth:

This semester I am a junior at Johns Hopkins University, working toward my bachelor's degree in international relations. I am seeking an internship for this summer 2010, and while researching opportunities in the field of international development, I am interested in some of the current projects at the International Rescue Committee. I am writing to inquire about possible internship opportunities in the Education Development department.

Through my academic and extra-curricular experiences at Johns Hopkins, I have developed an understanding of the challenges associated with laying the foundation for educational programs in developing countries. This past summer, I completed an internship in Santiago, Chile, with a nonprofit organization focusing on community health education initiatives. I instructed community members on proper nutrition and built relationships with local leaderships. My enclosed resume provides additional details about my skills and experience.

I will be in the Washington DC area during my winter break, January 6-10. I will call you next week to see if it would be possible to meet with you then to further discuss internship opportunities with the International Rescue Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Hopkins Student