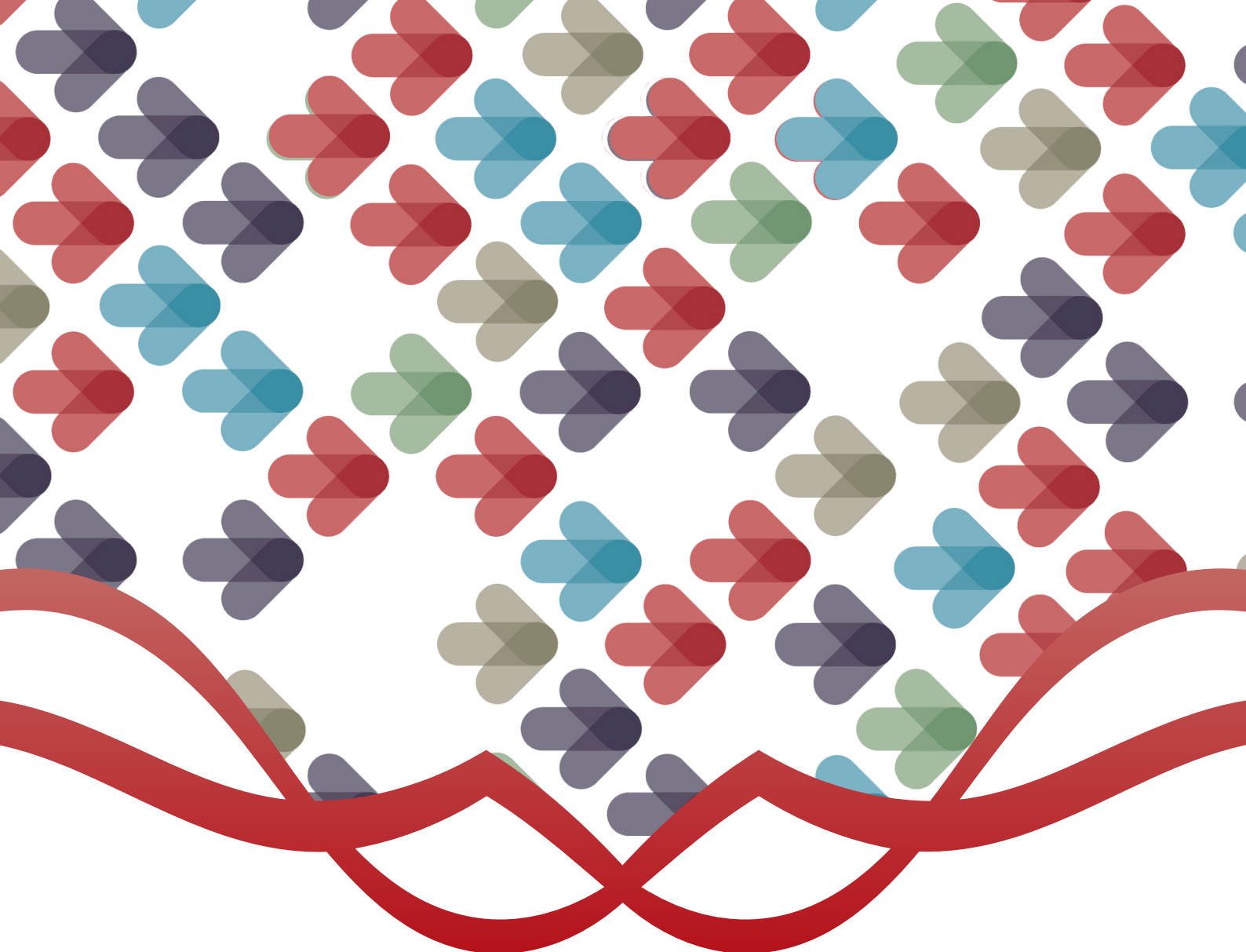




**FHASS Employability  
Resource Hub:**

# **COVER LETTER GUIDE**



## Introduction

A cover letter is a critical component of your job application that allows you to introduce yourself to potential employers, demonstrate your enthusiasm for the position, and articulate why you're the ideal candidate. While your CV outlines your qualifications and experience, the cover letter is your opportunity to tell your story and make a personal connection with the employer.

This guide provides an in-depth look at how to craft a compelling cover letter that will help you stand out in a competitive job market.

## Understanding the Purpose of a Cover Letter

A cover letter serves multiple purposes, each essential for making a strong impression:

1. **Introduction:** It introduces you to the employer, providing context for your application. This is your first chance to make a positive impression and set the tone for the rest of your application.
2. **Personalisation:** A cover letter allows you to demonstrate that you've taken the time to research the company and understand the role. It shows that you're not just sending out generic applications, but are genuinely interested in this particular opportunity.
3. **Argument:** The cover letter gives you the space to highlight your most relevant skills, experiences, and achievements. It's where you make the case for why you're the best candidate for the job, aligning your qualifications with the needs of the employer.
4. **Closing the Gap:** If there are any gaps in your CV or aspects of your background that might raise questions (such as a career change or a period of unemployment), the cover letter is the place to address these points proactively.

## Structure of a Cover Letter

A well-structured cover letter is clear, concise, and easy to follow. Here's a detailed breakdown of the sections you should include:

### Header

Your header should include your contact information. This information should be formatted professionally, making it easy for the employer to contact you, and should be found in the top right corner of the letter.

#### Your Name

Your Address

City, Postcode

Email Address

Phone Number

LinkedIn Profile or Portfolio Website (optional but recommended if relevant)

*Note:* Including a LinkedIn profile or a link to your portfolio is particularly useful for roles in creative industries, tech, or any job where your online presence is part of your professional identity.

## Addressing the letter

Whenever possible, address your cover letter to a specific person. This adds a personal touch and shows that you've done your homework. Use LinkedIn or the company's website to find the hiring manager's name.

If you can't find a specific name, "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear [Department] Team" is acceptable.

*Examples:*

- "Dear Mr. Smith,"
- "Dear Dr. Jones,"
- "Dear Marketing Team,"

Avoid using "To Whom It May Concern," as it feels impersonal and outdated.

## Opening Paragraph

The opening paragraph should be attention-grabbing and informative. Start by stating the position you're applying for and where you found the job posting. Briefly mention why you're interested in the role and the company. This is also a good place to introduce a key selling point—something that makes you stand out as an ideal candidate.

*Example:*

"I am writing to express my interest in the Marketing Assistant position at XYZ Company, as advertised on your website. With a passion for creative marketing and hands-on experience from my internship at ABC Agency, I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to your team. XYZ Company's innovative approach to digital marketing aligns with my professional aspirations, making this role an ideal next step in my career."

*Analysis:* This introduction does several things:

- Clearly states the job applied for.
- Mentions where the job was found.
- Expresses enthusiasm for both the role and the company.
- Highlights a key qualification.

## Paragraph 1: Why are you Interested in Working for This Organisation?

This paragraph is your opportunity to demonstrate that you have done thorough research on the organisation and that you have a genuine interest in being part of their team. Employers want to hire candidates who are enthusiastic about their company, not just the job itself. Here's how to make this paragraph stand out:

- **Highlight the Organisation's Values and Mission:** Begin by mentioning specific aspects of the organisation's mission, values, or culture that resonate with you. For instance, if the company is known for its commitment to sustainability, you could express how their dedication to environmental responsibility aligns with your personal values. This not only shows that you've done your homework but also that you share common goals with the company.

*Example:*

"I am particularly drawn to XYZ Company's commitment to sustainability and ethical business practices, which reflects my own passion for environmental stewardship. Your recent initiative to reduce the carbon footprint of your supply chain by 40% is a significant achievement, and I am eager to contribute to your ongoing efforts in this area."

- **Acknowledge the Company's Reputation or Achievements:** If the company has received awards, achieved significant milestones, or is renowned for its innovation in the industry, mention these in your cover letter. This demonstrates that you're aware of the company's impact and are excited about the possibility of contributing to its future success.

*Example:*

"XYZ Company's recent recognition as one of the top 100 most innovative companies in the UK underscores your commitment to pushing the boundaries of [industry/sector]. I have followed your developments closely, particularly your pioneering work in [specific area], and I am inspired by the opportunity to join a team that is shaping the future of the industry."

- **Express Enthusiasm for the Company's Culture:** Cultural fit is important for employers, so it's beneficial to convey your enthusiasm for the company's work environment. Whether the company fosters a collaborative, dynamic, or inclusive culture, explain how these aspects appeal to you and how you would thrive in such an environment.

*Example:*

"I am impressed by XYZ Company's emphasis on fostering a collaborative and innovative workplace. The way your teams work cross-functionally to drive creative solutions resonates with my own experience in [previous role], where collaboration was key to our success."

This paragraph sets the tone for your cover letter, showing that you're not just interested in any job, but specifically in the unique opportunities and environment that this organisation offers.

## Paragraph 2: Why are you Interested in This Role?

In this paragraph, focus on the specific job you are applying for and explain why it excites you. This is where you showcase your understanding of the role and how it fits into your career goals. Here's how to craft a compelling second paragraph:

- **Demonstrate Your Understanding of the Role:** Start by discussing the key responsibilities and requirements of the job. Show that you have a clear understanding of what the role entails by mentioning specific tasks or challenges that you are particularly eager to take on. This demonstrates that you have carefully read the job description and have a realistic sense of what the position involves.

*Example:*

"The Marketing Coordinator role at XYZ Company immediately caught my attention because of the emphasis on data-driven strategies to enhance customer engagement. I am particularly excited about the opportunity to analyse customer data and develop targeted marketing campaigns, as this aligns with my experience and passion for using analytics to drive impactful marketing decisions."

- **Explain What Appeals to You About the Role:** Go beyond the job description and discuss what specifically appeals to you about the position. Perhaps it offers a chance to develop a skill you're

passionate about, or it aligns with your long-term career goals. By articulating what excites you about the role, you show the employer that you're genuinely interested and not just looking for any job.

*Example:*

"I am especially drawn to this role because it offers the opportunity to lead innovative social media campaigns—a skill I have honed in previous positions and am eager to continue developing. The prospect of working on a project that involves launching a new product line also excites me, as it would allow me to contribute creatively while learning from experienced professionals."

- **Connect the Role to Your Career Goals:** If applicable, mention how this role fits into your broader career plans. Employers appreciate candidates who are forward-thinking and have a clear vision for their career trajectory. By connecting the role to your career goals, you're showing that you're committed to growing within the company.

*Example:*

"This role aligns perfectly with my long-term goal of advancing into a strategic marketing management position. The hands-on experience with campaign management and cross-departmental collaboration that this role offers would be invaluable as I work towards achieving this goal."

This paragraph should make it clear to the employer why you're excited about this particular role and how it fits into your career path.

### Paragraph 3: Why You?

The final paragraph is your chance to sell yourself. Here, you'll connect your skills, experiences, and achievements directly to the job role, explaining why you're the best candidate. Here's how to make a compelling case:

- **Highlight Your Relevant Skills and Experience:** Begin by referencing specific skills and experiences that directly match the job requirements. Use examples from your previous roles, internships, or academic projects to illustrate how you have successfully applied these skills in real-world situations.

*Example:*

"With over two years of experience in digital marketing, I have developed a strong skill set that includes content creation, SEO optimisation, and data analysis. At my previous position with ABC Company, I successfully increased organic website traffic by 25% in six months through strategic content marketing and SEO initiatives. I am confident that my ability to craft and execute data-driven marketing strategies would make a valuable contribution to your team."

- **Showcase Your Achievements:** Quantifiable achievements are particularly powerful because they provide concrete evidence of your capabilities. Whenever possible, include metrics that demonstrate the impact of your work, such as percentages, numbers, or other measurable outcomes.

*Example:*

"In my most recent role, I led a project that increased customer retention rates by 15% by implementing a personalised email marketing campaign. This experience not only strengthened my project management skills but also deepened my understanding of customer behaviour—insights that I am eager to bring to XYZ Company."

- **Explain Why You're the Best Fit:** Go beyond listing your skills and achievements by explaining why these make you the ideal candidate for the role. Consider the unique combination of skills, experiences, and personal attributes that you bring to the table. Highlight how these elements align with the company's needs and the role's demands.

*Example:*

"What sets me apart is my ability to combine creative thinking with analytical rigour. I not only develop innovative marketing campaigns but also have the analytical skills to measure their effectiveness and continuously optimise performance. I am confident that my proactive approach and ability to translate data into actionable insights would make me a valuable asset to your marketing team."

- **Mention Your Enthusiasm and Readiness:** Finally, reiterate your enthusiasm for the role and your readiness to contribute. Employers want to hire candidates who are not only qualified but also excited about the opportunity to make a difference from day one.

*Example:*

"I am excited about the possibility of contributing to XYZ Company's success and am ready to hit the ground running. My passion for marketing, combined with my proven track record of delivering results, makes me eager to bring my skills to your team and help drive continued growth."

This paragraph should leave the employer with a strong impression of why you are the most suitable candidate for the role, making it clear that you have the skills, experience, and enthusiasm needed to excel.

## Closing Paragraph

In your closing paragraph, reiterate your interest in the role and why you believe you're a strong fit. This is also where you express your willingness to discuss your application further and state your availability for an interview. End on a positive and confident note.

*Example:*

"I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to bring my expertise in digital marketing to XYZ Company and am confident that my proactive approach and strategic mindset would make me a valuable addition to your team. I look forward to the possibility of discussing how I can contribute to your marketing goals in further detail. Thank you for considering my application, and I hope to hear from you soon."

*Analysis:* This closing paragraph reiterates enthusiasm, expresses confidence, and leaves the door open for further communication.

## Signature

Close your letter with a formal sign-off. If you've addressed the letter to a specific person, use "Yours sincerely." If you used a general salutation like "Dear Hiring Manager," use "Yours faithfully."

*Example:*

"Yours sincerely,  
[Your Name]"

*Note:* If submitting electronically, you can include a scanned signature (if applicable), but it's not required. Simply typing your name is sufficient.

## Tips for Writing a Strong Cover Letter

To maximise the impact of your cover letter, consider the following tips:

- **Tailor Each Letter:** Customise your cover letter for each job you apply for. Employers can easily spot a generic cover letter, and it can come across as lazy or disinterested. Mention the company by name and reference specific aspects of the job description.
- **Keep it Concise:** A cover letter should be no longer than one page, typically between 250-400 words. Being concise forces you to focus on your most relevant qualifications and keeps the employer's attention.
- **Highlight Achievements:** Whenever possible, use measurable achievements to demonstrate your impact in previous roles. For example, instead of saying "I worked on a marketing campaign," say "I led a marketing campaign that increased product sales by 20%."
- **Use a Professional Tone:** The tone of your cover letter should be professional, but not overly formal. Avoid slang, jargon, and overly complex language. You want to be clear, direct, and polite.
- **Proofread:** Spelling and grammar mistakes can create a poor impression. Take the time to carefully proofread your cover letter. Consider asking a friend, family member, or career advisor to review it as well.
- **Follow the Application Instructions:** Some employers may specify how they want to receive your cover letter, such as a PDF file or included in the body of an email. Be sure to follow any specific instructions provided to ensure your application is considered.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

Avoid these common pitfalls when writing your cover letter:

- **Using a Generic Letter:** Sending out the same cover letter to multiple employers without tailoring it to the specific job is a common mistake. Employers want to see that you've taken the time to personalise your application.
- **Repeating Your CV:** Your cover letter should complement your CV, not duplicate it. Use the cover letter to expand on specific points, explain how your experiences make you a great fit for the role, and convey your enthusiasm.
- **Focusing on What You Want:** While it's important to express your interest in the role, the focus should be on what you can offer the employer, not what you hope to gain from the job. Employers are looking for candidates who can help them solve problems or achieve their goals.
- **Being Too Modest:** This is not the time to downplay your achievements. Be confident in showcasing your skills and accomplishments. However, make sure you back up your claims with evidence.
- **Overloading with Information:** Stick to the most relevant experiences and skills. Avoid overwhelming the employer with too much information. Focus on what matters most for the specific role.

- **Neglecting to Proofread:** Even minor typos or grammatical errors can detract from the professionalism of your cover letter. Proofread carefully to ensure your letter is polished and error-free.

## Final Checklist Before Submission

Before submitting your cover letter, make sure you've covered all the essentials:

- **Correct Recipient:** Have you addressed the letter to the right person? If not, is your salutation appropriate?
- **Tailored Content:** Have you customised the letter for the specific job and company?
- **Clear and Concise:** Is your cover letter within the recommended length? Is the content clear and to the point?
- **Highlighting Achievements:** Have you included specific examples of your achievements and how they relate to the role?
- **Proofreading:** Have you checked for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors?
- **Professional Presentation:** Is the letter formatted neatly and professionally? Is your contact information up to date?
- **Correct Format:** Are you submitting the cover letter in the format requested by the employer (e.g., PDF)?

## Conclusion

A well-crafted cover letter can be the difference between landing an interview and being overlooked. By following this guide, you can create a cover letter that not only captures the attention of potential employers but also effectively communicates why you are the best candidate for the job.



If you would like further support from the FHASS Employability Team you can visit our Blog, book an appointment through Careers Connect or email us at [fhassemployability@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:fhassemployability@lancaster.ac.uk)

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this resource guide is accurate but we recommend that you check all details carefully.

