The covering letter is usually the first part of your application that an employer is likely to read. You need to make a good first impression by presenting yourself in a positive light. A good letter needs to highlight your achievements, motivation and knowledge about the job and the company. This will give you the opportunity to show the employer how interested you are in the position, how relevant your skills are, and how well you have researched their company. This will make your application stand out from the competition and increase your chances for an invitation to an interview. A CV is a record of your personal history (factual) and the covering letter is the marketing document that allows you to show some personality and enthusiasm for the position. Your CV should always be accompanied by a covering letter.

LAYOUT
• Always word processed
• One to two pages (depending on the type of job) on A4 size paper
• Clear, short paragraphs
• Same style font, consistent with CV
• Attractive and neatly laid out

STRUCTURE AND WRITING STYLE
• Good English - clarity, fluency and grammar are very important
• Keep it concise using well-constructed sentences
• Check your spelling and grammar carefully
• Reflect on what’s required in the job before drafting the letter
• Expand on relevant information from your CV
• Use a positive and interesting tone
• Each letter needs to be individually aimed at a specific employer

COVER THE FOLLOWING
• Who are you and why are you writing? Are you responding to an advertisement or contacting the company speculatively?
• Why you are interested in that area of work and why you want the job
• What are your strengths/skills/relevant experiences? Try and match your skills with those required for the job
• Why do you wish to work for this employer?
• Benefits you could offer to the company and highlight your achievements
• Remember to describe your experiences in terms of achievements and outcomes
• End on a polite and optimistic note
• Close your letter with ‘Yours faithfully’ when commencing with ‘Sir or Madam’ and ‘Yours sincerely’ when you have used a name

AVOID
• Starting too many sentences with “I”
• Using coloured paper, if asked to send a hard copy
• Simply repeating/duplicating information on the CV
• Cutting and pasting sections from the employer’s own website
• Talking only in terms of what you will gain from working with the company, they want to see how you are going to add value to them too
• Over-reliance on ‘spell-check’ to highlight your mistakes

FURTHER INFORMATION
Available from the Careers Service:
• Reference books - available from the Careers Service
• Careers Service Website - www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/cover includes detailed information about producing effective CVs and covering letters, with examples for different types of covering letter and our ‘Quick Guide to Creating your Covering Letter’.
• Having your CV/Cover Letter checked - we offer Careers Consultations which can be booked through ‘JobsLive’ via the Careers Website, and also 5 Minute Final CV/covering letter checks daily (simply turn up and sign up – check the website for details).
• CV and Cover Letter Seminars - run during the autumn and spring terms and available to all students.

For information on the disclosure of disability or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia please see information on the Careers Service website: www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/disclosure
TYPICAL LAYOUT

Name of recipient
Job title of recipient
Address of recipient

Date

Dear Mr Jones (Sir/Madam)

RE: Title of the job or training scheme

Paragraph 1 - Explain who you are and why you are writing. How have you found out about the vacancy? If there is a reference number - state it here. (Remember companies may have more than one open vacancy so you need to be specific about the vacancy you are applying for).

Paragraph 2 – Useful to show your motivation for the work area. Explain why you are interested in this work area. How has your interest developed and how have you researched the industry sector and job role?

Paragraph 3 & 4 - Elaborate on your skills and relevant experience. Address the points made in the job description. This is the most important section - give evidence of your skills, for example, how did you become good at working in teams? Use positive language; make it relevant to the job in question. How will this employer benefit from employing you and most importantly: how do your skills match up to what you are applying for?

Paragraph 5 - Mention why you are attracted to this employer. Is there anything about the employer you might have read recently, can you talk about any specific projects they are involved in? You can make a positive impression by demonstrating that you have done a bit of research about this employer.

Paragraph 6 - A short summary underlining the benefits you could bring to the employer and your suitability for the job. If you need to offer an explanation for an issue on your CV then this could be a place to mention it giving reasons, but ensure that you use constructive language to explain and end on a positive note.

Finally... When might you be available for interview? Are you enclosing your CV? - ‘I would be pleased to provide further information about myself in person and look forward to hearing from you’ or similar.

Yours sincerely, (‘Yours faithfully’ if you have used ‘Sir or Madam’)

Signed

Your name (in full)