

Cover Letters

WHAT IS A COVER LETTER?

A cover letter is sent with your CV as part of your application. You can't know whether a recruiter will start off by reading your CV or your letter first. This means that you want both documents to be persuasive and high quality, so that you create a positive first impression and motivate your reader to read the rest of your application, whichever bit they start with.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CV AND COVER LETTER?

A CV is a summary of what you have achieved in the past. It is all about you – you don't mention the employer at all. So your cover letter is your opportunity to show that you understand the role/opportunity and organization you have applied for. It also allows you to reinforce the message from your CV that you have the knowledge, skills and personal attributes to be effective. Recruiters will need to be convinced of both these points. For internships a recruiter will need to see that you will value the opportunity they are offering, so motivation is especially important.

THE BASICS

- Length should be a maximum of one page
- Use a professional letter layout appropriate for the country you are applying to and ensure your spelling and grammar are correct. (This reassures the reader that you will represent their organization professionally when you work for them).
- Address your letter to a named person where you can but if not, address it to 'Dear Sir/Madam'
- Begin your letter with a short paragraph stating what you are applying for, where you saw the opportunity advertised and what your degree programme and stage is.
- Send electronic copies in PDF format
- There is no need to tell them what you don't know or haven't got experience of – focus on the positives

CONTENT

• Evidence you will be effective

Convince the reader that you understand the role you have applied for and have the knowledge, skills and personal attributes to be successful. To do this, start by analysing the job/internship advert and working out what you have that matches it. What evidence do you have that you have what they need? You can use evidence from your academic achievements, extracurricular activities, work experience, volunteering or sports. Think about times you have been successful, taken the initiative or made an impact. Write about the positive outcomes of what you have done.

• Evidence you will be motivated

You may have excellent knowledge and skills but if you aren't motivated then you will be unlikely to do the job well. Think about why you really want to do this job/internship at this organisation. Motivation can be evidenced in a variety of ways:

	Example 1	Example 2
Reading	Reading their website. Useful sections include 'About us', company values, mission statement and their careers pages. Following them on social media	Learning about the broader sector e.g. following the financial news
Talking	Meeting someone from the organization at a careers fair or other event	Meeting an alumni through LinkedIn or 'Ask an Alumnus' (see website)
Doing	Work shadowing and internships	Relevant student societies, relevant extracurricular projects, choosing relevant options in your course

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

It really helps your reader if you can structure your content in a logical and organised way. Before you start to write, think through the structure of your letter and decide what message you would like the reader to take away from each paragraph. Keep your sentences short – remember recruiters need to read your letter quickly, so keep it easy to follow. See an example overleaf.

FURTHER SUPPORT

- **Careers Service website:** www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/applications
- **CV and cover letter presentations and workshops:** book through JobsLive*
- **Bookable appointments** with Careers Consultants: book through JobsLive*
- 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

* www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/jobslive



Example covering letter for a graduate role:

Virlan Productions Ltd.
Central Square
Winchester
SO22 1AB

Elena Student
24b National Road
London
NW9 2XB

24 October 2018

Dear Ms Carter

I am a final year MEng Biomedical Engineering student at Imperial College London and am writing to apply for a position on the graduate programme at A.K Pharma. I am particularly interested in the medical devices stream.

Developing medical devices, whether computer-based applying theory from my course or practically as part of my project and volunteering experiences, has always been an activity I have very much enjoyed. Seeing my creations being bought to reality and how people interact with them, is enormously satisfying, and has helped me appreciate that a career in medical devices is for me. Developing, testing and analysing the usage of a knee joint, in collaboration with amputees and my supervisor, Dr Wong, was the subject of my final year research project. I have enjoyed being able to help manage the whole project, from initial modelling through to presenting my work back to tutors. On completing the graduate programme at A.K Pharma, I hope to become a chartered engineer and continue to work in your team developing cutting edge solutions for clients.

Working as a volunteer for MERU has helped me to further understand the role of Biomedical Engineer. As one of a team of five students and three professional bioengineers, I helped to develop assistive equipment for children with a range of disabilities. My main role was gathering and analysing feedback from focus groups when the products were being testing. I facilitated the group discussion, using probing questions to help the children explain fully what they found good and bad about the devices. I then discussed these findings with the team, making further recommendations, so that we could work together to optimise the devices. Being the bridge between the end user and the engineering team was often challenging; however when the device finally worked, the enthusiasm from all parties was infectious. I look forward to helping to create this excitement in my career at Elena Productions.

I thrive on working on distinct projects with specific objectives. I understand from talking to Mr McCaw, a technician in your medical devices team at the Imperial Engineering Fair, that this is also Elena Production's preferred way of working. The majority of my previous engineering experience has involved a project-based, outcome-driven approach, which is very much in line with Elena Productions's values, as outlined on your website. Mr McCaw also told me how your company regularly seeks to collaborate with many different organisations, from charities to manufacturers.

I was particularly interested in the work being undertaken with the NHS involving synthesising functional vitreous humor by adapting collagen synthesis. From my previous work experience, which includes several customer service roles, I know I work best when discussing and working through problems with a wide range of people, something I very much look forward to doing at Virlan Productions, in medical devices product development.

Thank you very much for considering my application and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Elena Student
MEng
Biomedical Engineering (2015-2019)
Imperial College London

