

Application Letter Writing - Health

Why do I need an application letter?

The application letter you send with your resume often provides you with your first opportunity to present yourself to a potential employer.

An application letter **should accompany each application** and is much more than a cover letter that introduces your resume. An application letter is a **targeted, precise, interesting** communication that provides an opportunity for you to **highlight skills and experience**, and **express an interest in the position**. The aim of an application letter is to encourage the employer to look closely at the accompanying resume and other paperwork, and to hopefully invite you to an interview.

An application letter should

- Be targeted for each application
 - Aim at getting attention quickly
 - Be error free
 - Be courteous
 - Have a positive, enthusiastic tone
 - Make use of short paragraphs and clear language
 - Refer to the organisation and include why you want to work for this particular employer
 - Tell the employer how you will meet their needs
 - Be a balance between self confidence and modesty
 - Be drafted and redrafted until it is right
 - Be checked by someone else before it is sent out
 - Be presented on good quality paper
 - Be printed on a quality printer
 - Be typed, not handwritten
 - Be sent unfolded with your resume (use an A4 envelope)
- Keep your application letter to **one page maximum**. Aim for 3-4 paragraphs of concise, easy to read text.
 - **Personalise** your letter as much as possible. Find out the name and position of the person to send it to, and research the organisation so you can tell them why you want to work for them. This is great preparation for when you (hopefully!) get invited to an interview.
 - **Get feedback** from an independent person. Fresh eyes will find mistakes you overlooked because of your familiarity with the content of your letter. Remember that you can email your draft applications to Careers and Employment for feedback.
 - Make sure you **address any key requirements** if you are responding to an advertisement. Selection criteria require a separate response in addition to your letter.

There are usually two types of application letters. One is a **response** to an advertisement, or personal contact, and the other is seeking to be considered for possible vacancies and is often called a '**speculative**' or 'cold canvas' letter.

Sophie's story

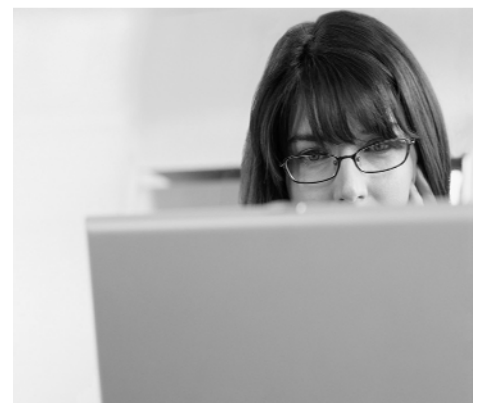
I thought that writing an application letter would be really easy after all the time I spent doing my resume and portfolio.

*It turned out to be more difficult than I expected, especially because I didn't want to waste the chance of **making a positive first impression** in writing.*

*I tried to make it easy for the person reading it to see the **relevance** of my skills and experience.*

*That meant I had to **make the links** from my resume to the job I was applying for – rather than expecting someone to read between the lines.*

Luckily I emailed my draft letter to a friend for a final read-through – there were two spelling and grammatical errors that I hadn't picked up, even though I'd read it through really carefully heaps of times.



Example letter

Ms Sophie Mitchell
11/23 Leichardt Street
Mango Hill Queensland 4509

1 August 2012

Mr Paul Rankin
Director – Human Resources
Department of Clinical Physiology
St David's Heart Institute
GPO Box 2546
Brisbane Queensland 4001

APPLICATION LETTER TIP 1

*Make sure you observe **business letter writing conventions** – left hand justified, open punctuation, clear, concise, readable – and of course, **NO** spelling or grammatical errors! This is a **formal** letter, whether it is hard copy or electronic, and whether you know the person you are writing to or not, so make sure it reflects positively on you as a professional. Never start a letter with “Good morning Ms Smith”, and always use the person's preferred title such as Mr/Ms – never their first name, and never “Dear Jane Smith”!*

Dear Mr Rankin

Why you are making contact

- *To apply for an advertised position*

I am writing to apply for the position of Cardiac Technician which was advertised in the Courier Mail on Saturday 26 July 2012 – reference no. DRV 76.

- *To apply for any positions that may become available (a speculative application)*

I am writing to express my interest in working as a cardiac technician within your organisation. Angela DeMasi, a registered nurse from your institute who I met through a recent professional development event, suggested that I contact you directly as available positions at St David's are not always advertised.

Who you are

Currently I am in my final year of a Bachelor of Exercise and Movement Science degree at QUT with a major in cardiac physiology, and am due to complete my studies in November this year. My areas of special interest are cardiology, neurophysiology, respiratory medicine, transplantation and vascular medicine. I have achieved consistently high academic grades and excellent feedback on my practicum placements.

What you are offering – marketing yourself

You will see from my resume that I have participated in a range of industry placements and voluntary work over the past four years of my course, including the Sunshine Coast Public Health Unit, Brisbane Private Hospital Cardiac Rehabilitation Services, Mango Hill Body Designers, the QUT Health Clinic and Fernwood Fitness. These experiences have enhanced my skills in exercise physiology, enabled me to link theoretical learning to practice and provided opportunities for me to demonstrate my skills in time management, working under pressure, verbal and written communication and team work. These experiences have also contributed significantly to my understanding of the realities of the world of work, including the importance of a positive work ethic. I am a self-motivated and enthusiastic person with a strong passion to develop my career in cardiac rehabilitation, and I am eager to implement the professional skills I have developed so far while being committed to ongoing learning.

Why you are interested in them

From my research of St David's, via your website and through discussions with one of your employees who has been my mentor for the past 12 months, I have been motivated to apply to work with you. From my practicum placements and other work experiences, I have become aware that my preference, at this early stage of my career, is to work in smaller, more personalised settings where high quality care is a priority, there is a commitment to ongoing research, professional development and mentoring and where there are opportunities to work with a diverse range of clients and clinical issues. I am excited by the range of services you offer as these would provide an excellent opportunity for me to demonstrate and develop my skills across a variety of areas. I am also impressed by your organisation's mission, in particular its commitment to working as a partner with its

clients to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and the wider community, and I am confident that my personal and professional values are aligned with those of St David's.

Closure

Thank you for considering my application. Please find enclosed a copy of my resume which provides more details of how my skills and experience meet the requirements of your organisation. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at an interview to further discuss my suitability for this position. I can be contacted on mobile 0413 721 201, at home on 5445 7768 or via email at sophie.mitchell@bigpond.com.

- *If this is a speculative letter*

I will contact you within the next week to discuss the possibility of meeting with you to further explore my suitability for current or upcoming positions at St David's.

Yours sincerely

(leave space here for your handwritten or scanned signature)

Allie Smith

MORE TIPS FOR WRITING APPLICATION LETTERS

APPLICATION LETTER TIP 2

Show that you value what you've learned from your degree and other work and life experiences, and that you recognise the transferable skills gained that you will be able to apply to this workplace. Focus on what the employer is looking for – they won't spend much time trying to find ways in which you can meet their requirements, so make it easy for them.

APPLICATION LETTER TIP 3

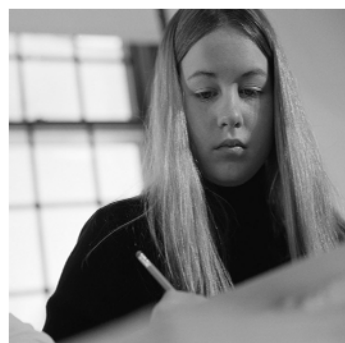
*This is your opportunity to highlight your **relevant experience, skills and qualities**, gained from uni, part time and other employment, voluntary work, extracurricular activities and so on. Don't be shy – employers won't know what you are offering unless you tell them!*

APPLICATION LETTER TIP 4

*Make sure you **tailor each application letter** to the specific organisation. This makes you stand out from other applicants as it indicates that your job search is a targeted approach, rather than sending the same generic letter to 50 employers.*

APPLICATION LETTER TIP 5

*"Apply in writing" doesn't usually mean a handwritten letter. Employers generally require typed hard copy or electronic (email or online) applications. **Be guided by what the employer is asking for**, and make sure you respond to selection criteria if requested. If it's not clear what is required, contact the person mentioned in the advertisement to clarify.*



DID YOU KNOW?

Careers and Employment can provide feedback on your draft application letter, resume and responses to selection criteria. Email your draft as a Word attachment to careers@qut.edu.au, or drop in a hard copy to Student Support Services, Level 4, C Block, KG / J Block, Caboolture.

*Please allow **5 working days** for feedback.*

SPECULATIVE LETTERS

What is a speculative letter?

This type of letter is sent to an employer or employment agency, seeking consideration for possible employment opportunities, i.e. positions which are not currently advertised or which do not currently exist.

It is vital to incorporate the speculative approach in your jobsearch because

- a high percentage of jobs are filled in the unadvertised job market
- many employers rely on keen students who write to them, of their own initiative, to fill vacancies
- an employer may be impressed with your initiative, experience, and excellent presentation and make efforts to create a position and accommodate your request
- an unexpected job vacancy may arise and your application is already in the employer's hands

Some sample paragraphs for speculative letters follow:

Example of speculative opening paragraph...

Recently I became aware of the new music program at St. John's School. My interest in this program and genuine commitment to teaching in a Christian educational environment provides the impetus for my request. I would like the opportunity to visit your school, learn more about your programs and if possible observe classes in action. I would also appreciate your advice as to the possibility of teaching positions at St John's in 2010.

Example of a paragraph which links you and the position...

Over the past six years I have held a number of part-time positions. These have involved working with children in a range of settings including after school and vacation care. This experience has provided the opportunity to develop planning and behaviour management skills, as well as communication, time management, and organisational skills.

Example of a closing paragraph...

Having contact with your school, which fosters learning in a Christian environment and values the arts and creative thinking, would be of great value to my growth as an emerging teacher. I would appreciate the opportunity to visit your school and will telephone you within the next week to discuss when this could be arranged.

NEED MORE HELP?

- Check out the **Careers and Employment website** www.careers.qut.edu.au and look under **A-Z Info Sheets** for info on application letters, resumes and other application paperwork as well as personal transferable skills.
- Have a look at **Australian sites** such as CareerOne for resources on application letter writing. Go to http://resume.careerone.com.au/coverletter/home.aspx?HPS=4_5C3CoverLetter
- Also check out the **career resources** section on Seek at www.seek.com.au/career-resources/

