



Teachers College ~ Columbia University
Career Services

Cover Letter Writing Guide: Academic/Faculty Positions

Cover letters are letters of application that supplement and accentuate information on the resume. They should be written with the reader's interest in mind. Direct particular attention toward specific skills and use concrete examples. Make sure you clearly stated why you are interested in the company, what you have to offer, and how you can contribute.

ACADEMIC COVER LETTER GUIDELINES

- Never send a resume without a cover letter (unless directed)
- It should be concise and no more than two pages with five to eight paragraphs maximum.
- Use 12 point, Times New Roman Font (font can be 11 point except for corporate jobs)
- Use .8-1 point. (for corporate jobs, font must be 1 inch)
- Use the same identifying information format for resume and cover letter
- Address your cover letter to the recruiter/hiring manager. If you do not know the name of the appropriate individual, call the organization and request the proper contact person's name and title.
- Double check spelling of contact names and titles.
- Tell an employer why they will benefit from hiring you not what you are going to gain from them
- Use action verbs
- Use your own words; you do not want your cover letter to sound like it was copied from a book or the internet
- Let your letter reflect your professionalism, individuality and creativity
- Demonstrate your abilities with concrete examples.
- Check for spelling and grammar mistakes. Spelling, typographical, and grammatical errors are unacceptable.
- Sign your letters in blue or black ink.
- How to send it
 - As an Email, the cover letter should be the body of the email message and (attach your cover letter and resume as two separate MS Word or PDF attachments or follow employer's directions).
 - Standard mail, the cover letter should be printed on resume paper (match paper used for resume). Do not staple your resume to your cover letter
 - Fax on standard paper (resume should follow)

Use the same heading that is on your resume or CV

2 spaces

Date

4 Spaces

Name

Title

Organization

Street Address or PO Box #

City, State, Zip Code

2 Spaces

Dear Mr./Ms_____:

1 Space

1st Paragraph: State why you are writing by identifying the position, field or general area of your inquiry. Tell the employer how you heard of the opening. Be specific: tell them that the job was listed on TCCS LINK. If you were referred by someone, include that person's first and last name. Let the employer know the degree you will receive or received, the graduate school you attend or attended, the type of license/certification you will be eligible for or have (if applicable), and that your CV is attached. You may introduce your interest in the position or make a claim for your candidacy (which you will elaborate on later in the letter). Make this first paragraph short—pique interest.

1 Space

Body Paragraphs: Include a sentence that introduces your overall areas of expertise which illustrates that you are qualified for this position (this sentence can also be included as the closing sentence of your first paragraph). Avoid "I feel" and "I believe" phrases. You want to have three separate paragraphs focusing on your research, teaching and advising student experiences. Important: These three areas represent the most common major requirements and subsequent qualifications needed for a faculty position. However, these body paragraphs can be adapted based on the specific requirements of the job and your professional background. You will want to order these sections (research, teaching and advising students) according to their importance within the *institution/department you are applying*. For example, if the department/institution is focused on research begin this section by describing your research experience and follow with teaching and advising; if the department/institution is focused on teaching begin this section by describing your teaching experience and follow with research and advising. In other words move the sections around based on importance to the institution.

1 Space

Research: Use the language of the announcement and the department's/ institution's website to guide you. Provide context for your work; show that you are a forward-thinking professional. In discussing your work, note the recognition it has received in the form of competitive grants, awards, publications in referred journals, and/or presentations at major conferences. It is also important to mention where you expect your research to go after the completion of your dissertation and the publications that will follow from it. They want to see evidence of a scholarly agenda that extends beyond the dissertation. Think twice about mentioning future projects that appear entirely unrelated to your current work. Departments will want you to be firmly established in one area before you go off into another. It is also important to be familiar with the research focuses of the department and/or institution and illustrate how you will support these efforts.

1 Space

Teaching: Discuss teaching and your teaching philosophy (even if a separate “Statement of Teaching Philosophy” is required). Be sure to mention experience with new pedagogies or technologies in the classroom. If you've had the opportunity to design and teach your own course, tell them, briefly, how you went about it and the choices you made. Don't just say you're a good teacher, tell them why. Look over your teaching evaluations and pick out one or two consistent strengths to highlight. Draw on your experience, talk about how you engage students and enhance their skills and intellectual development. If you have TA'd some of the courses that (based on the job description) you would be expected to teach, let them know. If you have not had that opportunity, but your field and research fall within the domain of the job description, you may want to add a line about how well prepared you are to teach such courses based on your training and research. If you have limited or no teaching experience; discuss what and how you would teach. You will impress the committee if you show connections between your research and teaching.

1 Space

Advising: Advising will be a likely component of any academic position; therefore you will want to indicate how you have worked with students in one-on-one or group environments to demonstrate your mentoring and counseling abilities. Tell about how and to what capacity you have advised students. Have you advised pre-major students and how many? Have you advised major students and to what extent; have you worked with them on thesis or culminating project? Have you worked with Masters or Doctoral students and if so in what ways? In this section you can also include experiences with group advising like a student club.

1 Space

Closing Paragraph

Include two or three of your skills that relate to the position and how the population will benefit from these skills. If you're still working on your dissertation, you should mention somewhere in the letter when you expect to be awarded the Ph.D/EdD., even being as specific as to mention how many chapters have been completed and accepted, how many are in draft version, and what your schedule for completion is. Mention if you will be attending an upcoming major professional conference in your field, such as the MLA convention for language and literature professionals and indicate that you will be available for an interview at the conference. If you have some special connection to the school, type of institution, or region, such as having attended the school as an undergraduate or having grown up in the area, you may wish to mention that information briefly at some point. In addition, you should highlight your willingness to forward upon request additional materials such as writing samples, teaching evaluations, and letters of recommendation. Let the employer know that you are available for questions about your background and experience. Thank the employer for his/her consideration. Include your phone number and email address (same contact information listed on your resume)

2 Spaces

Sincerely,

3 Spaces

Your Name Typed

Sources: Adapted from Perdue's Academic Cover Letter, University of Virginia's Academic Cover Letter and University of California Berkley's Academic Cover Letter

