COVER LETTERS

An application letter is also called a cover letter and is an important part of your job application.

It is your chance to introduce yourself, summarise why you are right for the job and entice the employer to read your resume and shortlist you for an interview.

Preparation

■ You need to prepare by reading the full position description. Most jobs have downloadable position descriptions or you could call/email the company to ask for one.

■ Most job advertisements and job descriptions contain two sections. The first describes the duties you would be expected to carry out. The second describes the job requirements and outlines the skills, experience and qualifications that are required to do the job.

■ If you lack a preferred quality you can still apply for the position, providing that you can persuade the employer that your experience is relevant.

■ If the job description says that candidates need to clearly address all criteria, you will also need to create a separate document and address the key selection criteria. See Quick tip on Selection Criteria for how to do this.

The Look

■ one page—from start to finish

■ typed on plain white paper if being sent via mail

■ blocked on the left-hand margin, without indenting

■ contain structured paragraphs with a double space between all paragraphs

■ in a word document or PDF format

■attached as a separate document if sent via email; not in the body of the email.

Structure

A good basic structure could be four paragraphs:

1. introduce yourself and say why you believe you are a good fit for the job

2. outline briefly your relevant work experience

3. outline your related education and qualifications

4. summarise the connection between your skills and experience and this position, and why you particularly want to work at this organization.

The Contents

The letter should flow in a way that takes the reader from one point to another naturally.

■ Avoid long, complicated sentences where points can get lost.

■ Avoid starting every sentence with 'I'.

■ Use concise and simple language.

■ Use a conversational style of speech.

■ Avoid impersonal phrases, such as: as per your advertisement.

■ Use active verbs.

■ Make the first paragraph interesting to read.

■ Try to be enthusiastic.

■ Give the employer an insight into your personality.

■ Check your spelling and grammar – and ask someone else to proof read.