



POST ACADEMY SUPPORT

Week 9: Cover Letters

During this exercise, you will learn:

- To access and use the National Careers Service website.
- What a cover letter is and why it is needed.
- To set out a cover letter with appropriate layout and language.



Welcome to the ninth week of the SCC Post Academy Support documents. Earlier in the week, we recapped how to write an engaging and persuasive CV and hopefully you have had the time to update and perfect yours. Remember, CVs are a bit like a sales pitch to prospective employers to show how you can help them to develop their company. Get it right and you'll be asked to interview for the chance of bagging that dream job.

One aspect that was not covered on the course was that of **cover letters**. For some jobs, you may be asked to provide a cover letter with your CV. But what is a cover letter and why is it needed?

A cover letter, according to Prospects.ac.uk, is:

"... a document sent alongside your CV when applying for jobs. It acts as a personal introduction and helps to sell your application. A cover letter is necessary as it gives you the chance to explain to an employer why you're the best candidate for the job."

But why is it important to send a cover letter? Well, simply because not all employers have the time to read every CV, so a cover letter serves as a brief nudge in the right direction to persuade an employer to read your application in full.

The next pages will talk you through how to write a professional cover letter that can be sent alongside your CV to take you one step closer getting that job that you have always wanted. Let's get cracking!

Cover Letters

A cover letter is a letter that is submitted with your CV as an introduction about yourself and should summarise your professional background. On average, cover letters should be between 250 and 400 words only and be no longer than 1 page long.




Cover letters are *really* important! A good cover letter will persuade an employer to read your CV, a badly written one will result in your CV being left unread. Today, we will be creating great cover letters to help get you the job that you have chosen!

Cover letters can be broken down into different sections:

- A header
- A greeting
- An introductory paragraph
- A Achievements paragraph
- A 'good-fit' paragraph
- A call to action
- A formal closing

Like CVs, cover letters should be specific to the job that one is applying for, so no two examples should be the same.

Use the following breakdown of a sample cover letter to write your own example. You will need to do some research based on the job that you are applying for (your friend Google will help here!) but feel free to use some of the phrases in the example if you wish.

James Greygoose	123 New Street, CV37 5GH 
Software Engineer	0161 352 3342 
	James.greygoose@scc-academy.com 
	linkedin.com/in/jamesgreygoose 

HEADER

Start your cover letter with your name and contact details.

- On the left, add your name and your most recent job title. If this does not relate to the position you are applying for or if this will be your first job, leave the job title out.
- On the right, add your details including your LinkedIn account. Only provide details for social media that you would like a perspective employer to see e.g. if your Twitter or Facebook account contains personal or possibly unsuitable material or comments then leave them out.

To:

Dr Chris Meah

CEO

The School of Code

Custard Factory, Gibb St,

Birmingham B9 4AA

Under header, include the person that you are writing to with their full address (see left).

When starting your letter, if you aren't given their name and you can't find it on LinkedIn, you can use:

- Dear [Department] Hiring Manager
- Dear Hiring Manager
- To whom it may concern
- Dear [Department] Team

Dear Dr Chris Meah,

My name is James Greygoose and I would like to help The School of Code to change the lives of more people trying to get into software development. Having been a software developer for the past two years, I have gained a great deal of expertise in many different coding languages and helped to onboard and mentor 55 students over the past year. I believe that my background in teaching makes me the right candidate for the job.

GREETING AND INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

Don't start your letter with the fact that you work in this area... there's a good chance that everyone who applies will and this does not make you stand out! Start with who you are and how you want to be able to help the company with their goals, as set out in the job description. Follow this with a brief explanation as to how you would be able to do this based on past experience or skills. Remember to sell yourself; you are the right candidate for this job!

In my previous role as a front-end React developer I was primarily responsible for the planning, creation, and testing of a variety of front-facing applications whilst liaising with other back-end and UX departments to ensure that projects were delivered on time. I have experience of HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Jest, React, Agile working and AWS cloud storage.

ACHIEVEMENTS PARAGRAPH

Now is the time to add some more specific information about how you are the right fit for this job. Add the skills that you have (remember to include this course and everything you have learnt if applicable!) and how these skills resulted in a positive result for your company. If this is your first job, mention skills that are relevant that you have obtained at school, college or other groups.

I admire how The School of Code's mission is to equip all people for a career in technology and can do so without charging any fees. As someone who believes that everyone should be entitled to a free education, I am of the impression that I and The School of Code would be great match.

'GOOD-FIT' PARAGRAPH

Why do you want to work for this company? They will want someone who believes in the company ethos so make sure you have done some homework to find out what that is! Search for the company on the web and find out some aspects that resonate with you. When you've picked a couple out, expand on these to create a paragraph as to why your beliefs are aligned.

I hope that I can help to deliver a high-quality and exciting curriculum as part of The School of Code and would love to further discuss how my previous success at Facebook can help you to achieve your educational goals.

Sincerely,

James Greygoose

A Call to Action

Make sure that the person you are writing to knows that you would like to discuss things further. Remember to phrase your final paragraph with the fact that you are hoping to help them to achieve the requirements set out in the job description.

Formal Closing

Sign off with one of the following phrases:

- Best Regards,
- Kind Regards,
- Sincerely, (if you are writing to a particular person)
- Faithfully, (if you are writing to a generic person)

Below is a link to the Careers Service page on writing cover letters. It's full of useful tips concerning when to use a cover letter, who to send one to and what should be included. Use the information above and the NCS website to complete your own cover letter using the template below:

Hold CTRL and click on the following Word Image to access the cover letter template. You will not be able to add information to the sheet until you have downloaded it to your computer or tablet:

1. Select File
2. Click on Save As
3. Click on 'Download a Copy'
4. The file will now be downloaded to your computer or tablet.
5. If your browser (e.g. Chrome) shows you the download at the bottom of the page, simply click on this to open the spreadsheet.
6. If your browser does not show you the file you can:
 - **Windows:** Click on the kebab menu (the three dots in a vertical or horizontal line) in the top-right of your page and then click on 'downloads'. You can also type in Downloads to your search bar on Windows to access the folder.
 - **Android:** Navigate to your downloads folder on your computer or tablet. On an android tablet, this will most likely be in the 'File Manager' folder or might be accessible from the Quick Settings menu by swiping down from the top of the screen.
 - **Mac:** Your download will appear on your dock at the bottom of the screen (usually bottom-right). Simply click on it to open the file.
 - **iDevice:** On an iDevice, select Files > Browse > iCloud Drive and your downloads folder should be in there. You may also be able to access your downloads from your Safari browser by clicking on the download's icon (an arrow pointing downwards).
7. You should now be able to create your cover letter!

Once yours completed, remember to upload it to the CVs section of the Find My A website (linked below).



FINAL CHECKS



Before you send your cover letter, make sure you have completed everything on the list!

- Full Name
- Professional email
- Phone Number
- Date
- Relevant Social Media Profiles

Do you address the right person i.e. hiring manager in the company / your future direct supervisor?

Does your introductory paragraph grab the reader's attention?

- Did you mention some of your top achievements?
- Can you use numbers and facts to back up your experience?

Do you successfully convey that you're the right pro for the job?

- Did you identify the core requirements?
- Did you successfully convey how your experiences help you fit the requirements perfectly?

Do you convince the hiring manager that you're passionate about the company you're applying to?

- Did you identify the top 2 things that you like about the company?
- Did you avoid generic reasons for explaining your interest in the company?

Did you finalize the conclusion with a call to action?

Did you use the right formal closure for the cover letter?