University of Southampton

# CV AND COVERING LETTER GUIDE

Careers, Employability and Student Enterprise

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# INTRODUCTION

**When applying for a job, whether it is for a graduate role, placement, internship or part-time position, you will often be asked to submit a CV and a covering letter.**

These documents give you the opportunity to make a positive first impression with an employer, enable you to showcase your skills and demonstrate your suitability for the role and the organisation.

This guide is separated into two sections: CVs and Covering Letters. In each section you will find examples as well as information and advice for each document, allowing you to create your own relevant CV and covering letter, tailored to the role you are applying for.

The information in the guide focuses on applications within the UK job market. Further information and advice on applications for other countries can be found on GoinGlobal, which you can access through MyCareer: **mycareer.soton.ac.uk**

On **page 23**, you will find links to the full range of support available through Careers, Employability and Student Enterprise, including appointments, workshops and online resources.

# UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE APPLYING FOR

**Before you start writing your CV, it is important to research the role, the organisation and the sector so that you can understand the key responsibilities and skills required.**

## The Role

**You could look at:**

- The job description and person specification for the role you are applying for
- The Prospects website (**www.prospects.ac.uk**) to learn more about the job role you are interested in and the typical responsibilities you may have

## The Organisation

**You could look at:**

- The company website.
- Social media platforms such as LinkedIn, X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok
- Glassdoor, which provides reviews of companies written by employees and interviewees

## The Sector

**You could look at:**

- Trade and sector news websites and publications
- Prospects Luminate and the MyCareer Discovery Feed for UK Labour Market and sector-specific information

Once you have identified the skills and attributes required for the role you are applying for, it's time to establish how you can evidence these from your education, work experience and extracurricular activities.

**Top tip**

- Use the Successful Futures Pathway to help you evaluate, develop and articulate your skills. Find out more: **www.southampton.ac.uk/successfulfutures**





# BEFORE YOU START

## Skills Audit

**Now that you have established what type of job to apply for and you understand the role, the organisation and the sector, you will need to identify your skills. You can do this by conducting a skills audit.**

Follow the steps below to carry out your own skills audit:

Make a list of all your past and current activities including your degree, jobs, placements, internships, volunteering, clubs, interests etc.

Break each activity down into separate tasks; for example, your degree could include attending lectures, working on group projects, writing a dissertation, laboratory work.

Analyse each task and identify the skills you used to complete the task. These skills can then be used on your CV to demonstrate how you meet the criteria for the job that you're applying for.

## Skills Dictionary

**Here are some of the skills and attributes that employers value. Which of these can you evidence from your skills audit?**

**Adaptability:** Navigate uncertainties and adjust your approach flexibly to respond positively to change.

**Commercial Awareness:** Insight into the broader economic environment, professional awareness and how business/industries operate and remain competitive.

**Communication:** The effective expression and exchange of ideas, information, and emotions, fostering clear understanding and meaningful connections.

**Confidence:** Self-assurance and belief in your abilities, empowering you to face challenges with a positive mindset and resilience.

**Creativity:** Think outside the box, generate innovative ideas and approach challenges with originality.

**Critical Thinking:** Analyse information, consider different perspectives and make reasoned judgments.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Leadership:** Ensuring fairness, recognising and valuing difference and creating environments that embrace diversity.

**Leadership:** Inspire and guide others, make effective decisions and communicate with influence.

**Networking:** Build and maintain professional relationships, leveraging connections for knowledge sharing and collaboration.

**Problem Solving:** Analyse challenges, identify solutions and implement effective strategies to address complex issues.

**Research Skills:** Locate, organise, analyse and present relevant information or data on a specific topic.

**Resilience:** Adapt, bounce back from setbacks and maintain a positive mindset in the face of challenges.

**Self-Management:** Organise, prioritise and regulate your own activities, behaviours and emotions to achieve personal and professional goals.

**Teamwork:** Collaborate effectively with others, utilise individual strengths and contribute positively to achieve shared goals.

# WRITING YOUR CV

## Reverse Chronological CV example

**This stage of the guide will help you to review your CV and consider how the structure and content could be improved, before you start thinking about tailoring it to a particular opportunity.**

Here is an example reverse chronological two page CV, a style of CV which is commonly used when applying for many roles within the UK job market. Examples of alternative, sector-specific CVs can be found on **page 9.**

1

Always tailor your profile to reflect the requirements of the position you're applying for. Avoid using cliché words such as "dedicated" or "highly motivated" as these are very common and hard to evidence. Instead, try to describe meaningful and unique facts about you that demonstrate your suitability for the role, or set you apart from other applicants.

For example, if you speak multiple languages, you could describe yourself as "multilingual".

2

Always ensure that the heading of each section reflects the content that the section contains. It is typical to find headings such as Work Experience, Education, Volunteering on a CV, as well as Hobbies and Interests, Positions of Responsibility and Extracurricular.

3

The content of your CV should be in order of relevance to the role. You can split sections such as Work Experience and Education to prioritise the most relevant information for the role.

**CHARLES LAURENT**

07989 989765 | charles.laurent@email.com | LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/charleslaurent

**PROFILE**

Final year BSc Accounting and Finance student at the University of Southampton. Strong quantitative and analytical skills developed through financial modelling, data analysis and part-time retail experience. Seeking a graduate Economist role within the public sector.

**EDUCATION**

**University of Southampton** | BSc (Hons) Accounting and Finance | Sept 2023 – Jun 2026

Relevant modules: Financial Accounting, Management Accounting, Corporate Finance, Investment Analysis, Financial Modelling, Econometrics

- Demonstrated advanced quantitative analysis skills through econometrics coursework using Excel and SPSS to analyse financial datasets
- Applied financial modelling techniques and valuation skills to evaluate company performance and investment scenarios
- Strengthened presentation and teamwork skills through group consultancy project analysing a FTSE-listed company
- Developed independent research and critical analysis skills by completing a dissertation on "The impact of ESG reporting on investor decision-making in UK firms"

Project Work: Student Investment Fund | Team Analyst | Jan 2024 – May 2024

- Displayed financial analysis and research skills by evaluating technology companies using financial ratios and sector performance data
- Utilised financial modelling and valuation skills by producing a report recommending portfolio allocation changes based on investment analysis
- Enhanced written and verbal communication skills by presenting investment recommendations to academic supervisors and student peers

**Highfield Sixth Form College** | Sept 2021 – Jun 2023

A levels: Mathematics (A), Economics (A), Business Studies (B)

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Green & Co Accountants, Southampton** | Finance Intern | Jun 2025 – Aug 2025

- Demonstrated attention to detail whilst preparing financial statements and VAT returns for small business clients
- Analysed financial transaction data in Excel to identify cost trends and expenditure patterns for client accounts
- Displayed strong time management and organisation skills by producing accurate client financial reports and documentation in line with accounting and compliance processes

**University of Southampton Finance Society** | Events Coordinator | Oct 2023 – June 2025

- Organised professional networking events with representatives from Deloitte, KPMG and PwC to connect finance students with industry employers
- Expanded leadership and event management skills by coordinating a team of five committee members to deliver events attended by 80+ students
- Strengthened professional networking and communication skills through engaging with employer representatives and facilitating student–employer discussions



4

For university education, consider including relevant modules, key skills and any relevant activities or projects that you were involved in during your degree. You can condense your pre-university education so that your CV emphasises your current, or most recent education.

5

References do not need to be included on a CV, unless specifically requested by the recruiter.

6

If you have volunteering experience, this section can be structured in a similar way to work experience.

**Tesco Superstore, Exeter** | Customer Assistant | Sept 2021 – Sep 2023

- Provided high-quality customer service in a fast-paced retail environment serving over 200 customers per shift
- Maintained accuracy and attention to detail through managing cash handling and reconciliation processes
- Applied effective verbal communication and organisational skills by working collaboratively with colleagues to ensure efficient stock management and store operations
- Demonstrated strong time management and reliability by successfully balancing part-time employment with full-time study

**VOLUNTEERING**

**Southampton City Council – Financial Literacy Programme** | Student Volunteer | Jan 2024 – Present

- Delivered financial literacy workshops to secondary school pupils covering budgeting and financial planning concepts
- Utilised clear communication and presentation skills to explain complex financial concepts in accessible language for a non-specialist audience

**TECHNICAL SKILLS**

*Financial and analytical tools:* Excel (pivot tables, advanced functions, financial modelling), SPSS, PowerBI
*Software:* Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)
*Languages:* Fluent French, conversational Spanish

**CERTIFICATIONS**

**CFA Investment Foundations Certificate** | In progress

- Developing investment and financial analysis knowledge through studying key concepts including portfolio management, asset classes and financial reporting
- Strengthening understanding of global financial markets and professional ethics through CFA Institute coursework designed for finance professionals

**Bloomberg Market Concepts (BMC)** | Completed 2025

- Developed financial market knowledge by completing Bloomberg Market Concepts modules covering economic indicators, equities, fixed income and currency markets
- Applied financial data analysis skills through interpreting market data and investment concepts using Bloomberg Terminal-based learning materials

**INTERESTS**

Running and cycling, including participation in local charity races.
Interested in global financial markets and regularly follow FTSE and S&P 500 performance.

### Top tips

- → Use bullet points to ensure your CV is clear and concise (see **page 14** for further information on how to write effective bullet points).
- → Write your CV in the third person, avoiding the use of I, me and my.



Reverse Chronological CV example

# WRITING YOUR CV

**Some industry sectors prefer a one page CV. This is particularly relevant for Finance and Banking organisations, and for part-time roles in Retail.**

## One Page CV example

**CHARLES LAURENT**

07989 989765 | charles.laurent@email.com | LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/charleslaurent

**PROFILE**

Final year BSc Accounting and Finance student at the University of Southampton. Strong quantitative and analytical skills developed through financial modelling, data analysis and part-time retail experience. Seeking a graduate Economist role within the public sector.

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- Strengthened professional networking and communication skills through engaging with employer representatives and facilitating student–employer discussions



## Sections to include in your CV

- → Contact details (name, email address, phone number)
- → Personal profile
- → Education
- → Work experience
- → Volunteering experience
- → Extracurricular activities
- → Hobbies and interests

**Top tips**

- → Choose headings that relate to the information within each section to make it easy for the recruiter to find information on your CV.
- → You can split sections up to prioritise information that is relevant to the role e.g. Education can be split into Current and Previous; Work Experience can be split into Industry and Additional.
- → Each section should be in reverse chronological order (the most recent experience first).

## Different types of CV

**Academic** – Used for roles in academia, such as lecturing and post-doctorate research. This CV can extend beyond 2 pages, and can include research activities, conferences, publications and teaching experience.

**Creative** – Visually engaging and often used when applying for roles in design, marketing and media to showcase personality and artistic skills.

**Narrative** – Used sometimes when applying for research roles or applying for funding. Consists of written descriptions of contributions and achievements that reflect a broad range of skills and experiences.

**One-page** – Often used in Banking and Finance, or part time roles (see example **page 8)**.

**Reverse Chronological** – Most commonly used in the UK job market, showing most recent experiences first (see example on **page 6 & 7**).

**Skills-based** – Prioritises transferable skills and competencies over a chronological work history. Particularly useful if you are changing your career, have limited work experience or have employment gaps.

**Technical** – Used to highlight specialised skills, projects and technical expertise such as programming languages, frameworks or tools relevant to the job.

For more information on the different types of CV, as well as examples of their layouts, please visit:
**www.southampton.ac.uk/cvs**

# WRITING YOUR CV

## Personal Profile

**Your Personal Profile (sometimes shortened to just Profile) is a short, focused statement, often found at the beginning of a CV with the purpose of summarising the most relevant information about you. It should always be written with the job you are applying for in mind.**

### What should you include?

**Sentence one:** What you are currently doing, for example, the degree you are studying

**Sentence two:** One or two of the most relevant skills or experiences you have to offer in relation to the role

**Sentence three:** What you are applying for (optional)

**Examples:**

Multilingual BSc Sociology student at the University of Southampton with extensive voluntary experience within the charities sector. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills developed through Mentor role with Solent Mind Charity and ability to manage time effectively through balancing volunteering work, a part-time job in hospitality and studies.

MSc Business Heritage and Management student with a first class BA History degree. Attention to detail displayed during part-time Archivist role at Southampton Library and adaptability demonstrated through Student Ambassador role on University Open Days. Seeking a graduate role with the National Trust.





## Education section

**An overview of your formal education, with the current or most recent qualification first.**

### What should you include?

- Education institution's name
- Course name, level of study and grades or classification (if received)
- Dates of study
- A maximum of 6 relevant modules per course
- Dissertation / Thesis title if relevant to the role you're applying for
- Skills you have gained that match the skills required for the role you're applying for

### International qualifications

If your education has been in another country, you can order a statement of comparability. This is a paid for service so it is worth checking with employers at interview stage if they require this.
To find out more visit:
**www.enic.org.uk/individuals/statement-of-comparability**

**Example:**

**University of Southampton** **Sept 2024 – Sept 2025**
**MSc Digital Marketing**
Modules include: Principles of Marketing, Marketing Analytics Fundamentals, Consumer Insights
- Developed understanding of consumer behaviours and psychology through Consumer Insights module
- Demonstrated ability to analyse data insights to create successful marketing campaign through independent project

**University of Winchester** **Sept 2021 – June 2024**
**BSc (Honours) Psychology – 2:1**
Modules include: Research Methods and Data Analysis, Developmental Psychopathology, Social Psychology

Dissertation: How can clinical psychology help us recover from work-based anxiety?
- Increased understanding of human behaviour and motivations gained through Social Psychology module
- Enhanced communication skills and teamwork ability through group projects and presentations

**Barton Peveril Sixth Form College** **Sept 2018 - June 2020**
- A-levels in Psychology (A), Maths (A), Biology (B)

**Toynbee School** **Sept 2013 - June 2018**
- GCSEs: 10 grades 9 – 7 including English Language (9), Business Studies (8)

# WRITING YOUR CV

## Work Experience section

**Any work experience can add value to your CV. It is important that you clearly evidence the skills you have gained that align to the employer requirements.**

Your work experience should be divided into each role that you have taken part in.

You should always tailor your CV to each role you apply for. For support with how to effectively tailor your CV, go to **page 15**.

### What should you include?

- → Company's name and location
- → Role title
- → Dates of employment (you only need to include the month and year. If you are still employed you should replace the end-date of your employment with 'Present')
- → Between three to five bullet points which outline the tasks you have completed and skills you have developed, using the structure on **page 14**

### Example:

**Sainsburys, Southampton** | Team Leader | October 2025 - Present

**Sainsburys, Southampton** | Retail Assistant | June 2024 - October 2025

- → Demonstrated attention to detail by creating weekly staff rota that took into account availability, ensuring high levels of customer service were maintained at all times
- → Enhanced communication skills by assisting customers with product queries and helping resolve issues on the shop floor
- → Developed commercial awareness by observing customer buying patterns and using this insight to keep high-demand items well stocked





## Additional sections

**These sections aren't essential for a strong CV, but including relevant additional experiences can help you stand out. Think about the skills, knowledge, achievements, or qualifications you've gained that demonstrate the competencies employers are looking for. You should only include them if they add value to your CV and demonstrate relevant skills for the role.**

These sections should be structured in the same way as your Work Experience section (see **page 12**).

### Extracurricular Activities

If you have participated in a club or society at university, include it in this section and list your activities. This helps demonstrate valuable employability skills such as teamwork, organisation, and leadership.

### Volunteering

Including volunteering on your CV can demonstrate relevant employability skills, show your commitment to giving your time to help others, and highlight your willingness to take on responsibility.

### Technical Skills

Some roles may require specific technical abilities, such as coding in languages like C++, laboratory techniques, or proven language skills. Make sure any skills you list match the requirements of the role.

### Positions of Responsibility

Use this section to highlight roles where you've led, organised, or supported others, demonstrating leadership and initiative. Including it can strengthen your CV by showing employers you're capable of taking on additional responsibility.

### Project Work

A Project Work section highlights practical examples of how you've applied your skills through relevant tasks or challenges. Including it can help employers see evidence of your abilities, especially if you have limited formal work experience.

### Certificates and Awards

If you've won any awards which may relate to the role, you can include them in a short list on your CV. Mention the name of the competition, your achievement or award, and the date it took place.

### Hobbies and Interests

You don't need to include hobbies and interests on a CV, but if they demonstrate transferable and relevant skills—such as teamwork from playing sports or creativity from making artwork—they can be mentioned briefly.

### References

You do not need to provide references on your CV for a role in industry, however, they are generally expected on an Academic CV. Employers will often ask for your references once a formal offer of work is issued to you.

# WRITING YOUR CV

## Writing effective bullet points

**Writing bullet points on your CV allows you to demonstrate the skills you have developed or used in a clear and concise way, making it easy for the employer to find the information they are looking for. Including an active word, the skill and evidence of how the skill has been used ensures your CV is effective and the content is tailored to the role you are applying for. This structure can be used in any section of your CV to demonstrate your suitability for the role.**

**Active Word** – A strong word to begin your bullet point that has impact with a recruiter. See the bottom of this page for some suggestions.

**Skill** – Clearly state the skill you developed through this experience. Place emphasis on the skills that you have identified from the job description. See **page 4** for more information on analysing employers and job descriptions.

**Evidence** – Provide evidence of how you developed this skill based on your experiences. Be specific and clear about what you contributed and achieved, with any data or figures applicable, using positive adjectives to create convincing statements.

**Examples:**

Demonstrated effective communication and teamworking skills through collaboration with colleagues across different departments on workflow streamlining project.

Utilised SPSS to analyse consumer-behaviour survey data, identifying trends and audience segments that supported marketing strategy recommendations, leading to a first class grade.

## Active words

**Every bullet point on your CV should begin with a strong active word to draw the employer in.**

Here are some examples of active words you could use at the start of your bullet points:

**Achievement/Results:** Accomplished, Attained, Boosted, Delivered, Exceeded, Maximised, Outperformed, Secured, Surpassed.

**Analysis/Research:** Analysed, Assessed, Audited, Calculated, Compiled, Conducted, Evaluated, Investigated, Researched, Tested.

**Communication/Collaboration:** Authored, Briefed, Collaborated, Conveyed, Edited, Facilitated, Instructed, Negotiated, Presented, Translated, Wrote.

**Creation/Development:** Built, Composed, Conceptualised, Constructed, Created, Designed, Developed, Drafted, Formulated, Invented, Produced, Wrote.

**Improvement/Change:** Accelerated, Advanced, Amplified, Centralised, Clarified, Consolidated, Expedited, Enhanced, Revitalised, Streamlined, Transformed.

**Leadership/Management:** Chaired, Coordinated, Directed, Empowered, Guided, Headed, Led, Managed, Mentored, Oversaw, Supervised, Trained.

**Problem-Solving/Initiation:** Addressed, Resolved, Solved, Initiated, Launched, Pioneered, Overcame, Revitalised, Sparked.

Try to avoid using words such as ‘participated’, ‘assisted’ or ‘contributed’ in your CV as these are passive words and often don’t reflect the level of work you’ve put into any particular experience or achievement.





## Tailoring your CV to a specific role

**In order to demonstrate your suitability for what you are applying for, it is important that you tailor the content of your CV to match the requirements of the role.**

You first need to analyse the job description to identify any key words, skills and qualifications needed for the role. Then mirror that language in your CV, prioritising measurable achievements over daily tasks. You can do this by:

- → Refining your profile to match the company’s goals and the role’s purpose
- → Ensuring your bullet points provide evidence in a focused and concise manner
- → Reordering the content of your CV so the most relevant experiences are first

## Job description

**Working collaboratively as part of a small team,** you will **apply your creative and thoughtful nature to a variety of stimulating challenges, interpreting trends, building insight** and creating novel solutions. As a valued member of the department, your ideas will make a real contribution to the success of our projects. Immersed in a culture of empowerment and fresh thinking, you will take the next step in a successful career in your chosen specialism.

### Top tips

- → It is worth keeping a “Master copy” of your CV with all your experience on. You can then make tailored copies that are specific to each role you apply for.
- → As well as moving sections around on your CV to prioritise the most relevant experiences first, you can also split up sections, such as Work Experience and Education, to allow for greater emphasis on matching the role requirements.
- → Access the CV Self-Assessment Tool to get feedback on your CV: **www.southampton.ac.uk/cvs**

## Example bullet points

- → Demonstrated effective collaboration and communication skills whilst working in a team of 5 to identify and present effective cost saving solutions to the client during the Student Innovation Challenge.
- → Designed a feedback survey using MS Forms to gather ideas from society members to establish the best format for the End of Season Awards Event, resulting in a 40% increase in ticket sales.
- → Resolved recurring customer complaints by identifying delays at checkout and reorganising staff rota to reduce waiting times, resulting in increased customer satisfaction levels.
- → Utilised SPSS, Excel and Power BI to identify and interpret purchasing trends of defined demographics during Analytics Interpretation module.

# WRITING YOUR COVERING LETTER

## Covering Letters

**A covering letter gives you the chance to show your motivation for the role, demonstrate how your skills match the requirements and explain any areas of your CV that may need clarification, such as employment gaps. It can also be a space to share information about a disability or learning difference if you choose to.**

Some roles will ask for a covering letter as part of the application. If it's optional, including one can strengthen your application and add value to your CV. Below are some ways to do this effectively.

### Researching the employer

You could refer to company values you connect with, data that shows their success, or recent projects they have worked on. These details help explain what attracted you to the organisation and show genuine motivation to work there. Use a variety of sources to do your research such as their company website, LinkedIn and news outlets. Refer back to **page 4** for information on research you can do.

### Researching the role

Give specific details about what interests you in the role, such as opportunities to build new skills, receive training, or work towards a qualification. Showing that you understand what the job involves can demonstrate your motivation and readiness for the position. Use the job description to help you with this research.

### Tailoring your covering letter

Using specific information about the employer and the role demonstrates genuine interest in working there. Relate this information back to yourself. For example, by explaining how you align with their values and providing evidence such as relevant education, projects, volunteering, or work experience.

### Your Unique Selling Points (USPs)

Including your USPs in a covering letter helps you highlight the qualities, strengths or experiences that set you apart from other applicants. By clearly showing what makes you distinctive, you make it easier for employers to see the unique value you would bring to the role. **Page 17** will cover this in more detail.





## Finding your Unique Selling Points (USPs)

**Unique Selling Points are the strengths or experiences that set you apart from other candidates. They might include:**

- → A specific skill
- → Work experience, volunteering or extracurricular involvement
- → A qualification you've gained
- → A combination of these

Use your USPs in your covering letter to show why you're the strongest candidate for the role, tailoring them each time to match the job requirements.

## How to write about your USPs

### Understand what the employer wants

Start by analysing the job description to identify the key skills, attributes and experiences the company is seeking.

### Identify what you offer

Reflect on your own skills and experiences using the Skills Audit tool on **page 5**. Consider examples from work experience, academic projects, volunteering, clubs, and other extracurricular activities. The Successful Futures Pathway (**www.southampton.ac.uk/successfulfutures**) can also help you recognise the skills you've developed during your time at university and beyond.

### Match your strengths to the role

Compare what the employer is looking for with what you have to offer. The points where these align are your Unique Selling Points (USPs) for the role.

### Highlight your USPs in your covering letter

Use the "Why you?" section of your covering letter to clearly demonstrate these USPs. Below is an example of how to describe a USP effectively.

| Your Unique Selling Point | Evidence of your Unique Selling Point | What value does this bring to the role? |
|---|---|---|
| My strong ability to create engaging social media content | gained during a marketing internship at the MTM Agency where I managed Instagram and TikTok campaigns that increased follower engagement by 35% | will enable me to grow the company's online presence and strengthen brand visibility. |

# WRITING YOUR COVERING LETTER

## Covering Letter example

**Here is an example covering letter that may be used in an application for a UK-based role. It follows a typical structure and is a maximum of one page in length.**

**Introduction:**

Introduce yourself briefly, and state the purpose of the letter; to apply for the position. Refer to where you saw the advert or why you are writing if it is a speculative letter. You could provide a brief summary of one or two key reasons why you feel you are right for the role, citing the skills mentioned in the job description.

**Why them?:**

Give the reasons you are applying to that company/organisation. This is your chance to target your application and demonstrate that you have done your background research. Avoid vague generalisations about the organisation, such as mentioning their 'excellent reputation' or 'first class training programme'.

**Why this job?:**

Give reasons for your interest in the job or career sector for which you are applying. Indicate what abilities, knowledge, skills and/or qualifications (if applicable) you hope to gain by doing the job. Be specific about what you find satisfying about doing this kind of work.

**Why you?:**

It is vital to show what you can do for them. This part of the covering letter is where you should write about your Unique Selling Points (see **page 17**). Give reasons why they should consider you, drawing upon experiences, skills and knowledge that you have which are relevant to the job. You could expand upon themes or achievements mentioned in your CV to give greater context, but ensure you do not just repeat word for word what is already in your CV.

**Additional information:**

You can use an additional paragraph to explain any anomalies in your experience such as an employment gap or competencies that you do not yet have. Explain these in a positive way and consider mentioning how you have overcome any difficulties.

**Conclusion:**

Short final section, perhaps summarising your suitability for the job and/or looking positively towards the opportunity to discuss your application at interview.

If the letter is addressed to a named person, sign off with Yours sincerely. If not, use Yours faithfully.

**Speculative covering letters:**

You may also wish to submit a covering letter if you are contacting a company on a speculative basis. This may be a specialist company in your field of study, or a company you have a particular interest in working for that is not currently advertising a suitable role. You can find more information about speculative covering letters here: **www.southampton.ac.uk/coveringletters**

14 Oldfield Avenue
Guildford
GU2 7ZZ
eh14@your_email.com
07989 989765

Ms A Jones
James Day Recruitment
London
WC1A 9ZZ

12th October 2025

Dear Ms Jones,

**Application for Graduate Recruitment Consultant position**

I am writing to apply for the Graduate Recruitment Consultant position at James Day Recruitment Agency, as advertised on the 'MyCareer Jobs Board'. I will graduate this summer with a BSc Psychology degree and am predicted a high 2:1. I was inspired to apply for this role after speaking to one of your consultants whom I met at the University of Southampton Careers Fair.

It is my ambition to work for James Day Recruitment because your Investors in People accreditation reflects a genuine commitment to developing your employees, and your reputation for valuing every client relationship demonstrates the high standards you uphold. This aligns with my own desire to work hard for the benefit of others, as demonstrated through my voluntary work as a Student Mentor. The global nature of your company also appeals to me, as I would be able to continue to utilise my French language skills to liaise with colleagues in your Paris and Brussels offices.

I am particularly keen to have the opportunity within this role to take on additional responsibility from an early stage in my career. I enjoy taking on new challenges and have taken on the role of Team Captain in my university hockey team in recent seasons. I would welcome the opportunity to apply my interpersonal skills in a fast paced business environment, working closely with high profile clients and sourcing exceptional candidates. I developed these strengths through part-time work as a retail assistant and further refined them while delivering presentations to employees during a Student Innovation Project.

As you can see from my CV, I have a range of skills and experiences that will enable me to succeed in this position. My experience of working within an HR environment has strengthened my ability to communicate effectively and build relationships quickly with both internal staff and external candidates. This will enable me to liaise confidently with hiring managers to understand role requirements and provide timely updates throughout the recruitment process. I have also communicated with different types of audiences, from secondary school pupils to heads of department, and have developed my teamworking abilities through group projects. I am able to work effectively under pressure, as demonstrated in my degree programme when I was faced with multiple assignment deadlines within a week and I completed each one on time and to a high standard. During my part-time retail assistant role at Primark, I used my initiative to solve problems independently and worked flexibly to meet customer needs effectively. I was also able to apply knowledge from my 2nd year Social Psychology module, by applying psychological principles to everyday life and gain a deeper insight into customer behaviour.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application. I hope that I have demonstrated that I have the enthusiasm and commitment, as well as the necessary skills and experience, to succeed and be a future asset to your company. I am available for interview at your convenience, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Lockman





Covering Letter example

# DISABILITY AND INCLUSION

## Discussing a disability

**You do not have to share details about a disability, specific learning difference or long-term health condition during the recruitment process. It is completely your choice and there is no requirement for you to do so.**

Many employers have equal opportunity policies and procedures, and throughout the recruitment process you will have the opportunity to ask for any reasonable adjustments that may be required. This is to ensure the recruitment process is fair and you are not at a disadvantage. They cannot ask you whether you have a disability, just the adjustments you require.

If you decide to share information about your disability or health condition during the recruitment process, consider:

- → Your strengths and the skills you have gained from university and wider experiences e.g. writing minutes, giving presentations, time management
- → The different perspectives that you can offer the organisation
- → Any challenges you've faced and how you have overcome them
- → Your lived experience if relevant to the role

### Top tips

- → You can book an Ask the Adviser appointment to discuss any of the topics highlighted
- → Look for the Disability Confident symbol to identify employers who are committed to promoting opportunities for people with disabilities

disability confident

## Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability. They are specific to an individual.

You can request adjustments at any stage of the recruitment process. For example, you may feel you don't need any adjustments at the initial application stage, but if you are offered an interview, adjustments may be helpful and can be requested at that point.

## Support and resources

A range of resources and support is available for students who have a disability, are neurodivergent, or have a specific learning difference or long-term health condition (including mental health).

- → Skills workshops, Careers Fairs and events throughout the year
- → Support pathways on MyCareer including the 'MyPlus: Applying to roles with a Disability' pathway
- → Information about inclusive employers
- → Individual, personalised adjustments advice through the University's partnership with EmployAbility

For further support and information, please visit **www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/equality**





# USE OF APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS (ATS) AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

**Many companies use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to scan CVs and covering letters for keywords before they are seen by a recruiter. Even if you are well qualified for the role, if your application documents don't match with the role requirements, your application is likely to be filtered out in the early recruitment stages. The guidance given throughout this booklet is designed to enable you to successfully navigate this phase of the process.**

With AI becoming more prevalent in everyday life, it is important to acknowledge and understand its role within the application process for both recruiters and applicants. Recruiters, whilst using AI themselves, expect candidates to use AI ethically and responsibly. Employers want applications to be authentic and to be written by the candidate so they can get a sense of the individual making the application.

### Top tips

- → Always check the employer's AI usage policy before you begin your application
- → Be honest about your use of AI during the application process
- → Use AI to help you prepare for writing your application documents, but do not use it to create them
- → Don't use AI to misrepresent your skills or exaggerate your experience as you may be asked to talk about these during an interview

## AI used by recruiters

**As a recruiter, AI is often used to:**

- → Speed up the sifting of applications
- → Help identify applicants with the right skills, knowledge and experience
- → Reduce unconscious bias by anonymising applications
- → Keep candidates updated throughout the recruitment process
- → Detect text written by AI in applications

## AI used by applicants

**As an applicant, AI can be used to:**

- → Generate ideas for a CV or Covering Letter
- → Organise thoughts
- → Get feedback on spelling and grammar
- → Support the review of a job description to help identify key words that should be included in the application documents

# CHECK LISTS

**Before you submit your CV and covering letter it is important that you complete a final check. You can use the check list below.**

## CV check list

### Understanding the Role and Employer

- ☐ I have read the job description and identified the key skills, knowledge and experience required.
- ☐ I have researched the employer so my CV reflects their values, mission and goals.

### Format and Structure

- ☐ My CV is clearly formatted, uses a single column layout, and is written in the third person (without I, my, or me).
- ☐ My CV is organised by relevance, with each section in reverse chronological order (most recent first).
- ☐ My CV is no longer than 2 pages (unless an academic CV is required).

### Profile

- ☐ My Profile section is concise, states what I'm currently doing, highlights key skills, and specifies the type of role I'm seeking.

### Skills, Experience and Evidence

- ☐ My bullet points are tailored to the role and follow a clear structure (active word + skill + evidence).
- ☐ I have demonstrated my skills with specific examples, and any additional sections (e.g. volunteering, awards, extracurriculars) clearly link to the skills required for the role.

### Language, Accuracy and Professionalism

- ☐ I have used UK spelling, run a full spellcheck, and ensured the tone is professional and easy to read.
- ☐ Someone else has proofread my CV for spelling, grammar, and clarity.

## Covering letter check list

### Understanding the Role and Employer

- ☐ I have read the job description and identified the key skills, knowledge and experience required.
- ☐ I have researched the employer so my letter reflects their values, mission and goals.

### Format and Structure

- ☐ My covering letter is no more than one page, uses a clear readable font, is professionally presented and is formatted correctly for the way it is being sent (e.g. formal letter layout or part of an online application).

### Motivation and Organisational Fit

- ☐ I have clearly stated why I am applying to this specific organisation using research from a variety of sources.
- ☐ I have explained my motivation for the role/sector, my career goals, and how this role aligns with my career aspirations.

### Skills, Experience and Evidence

- ☐ I have described the most relevant skills, experience and knowledge I can bring, using specific examples.
- ☐ I have highlighted my unique selling points (USPs) and expanded on key points from my CV without repeating it.

### Clarity, Tone and Professionalism

- ☐ My writing is clear, focused, and easy to read, with short paragraphs that follow the recommended structure.
- ☐ I have used UK spelling, run a full spellcheck, and had someone else proofread it for clarity and accuracy.

### Closing the Letter

- ☐ I have ended with a confident summary of my suitability and used Yours sincerely (if addressed to a named person) or Yours faithfully (if not).





# Additional Resources

**Careers, Employability and Student Enterprise have a range of resources and support that you can utilise as a student and after you graduate.**

We're here to support you with every aspect of your career development. Whether you'd like feedback on your CV or covering letter, want to explore your career options, or need help finding graduate roles, internships or placement opportunities, our team is ready to help.

The Successful Futures Pathway on MyCareer guides you through exploring your career ideas, identifying the skills you've developed at university, and showcasing them effectively in your CV.

We offer a wide range of 1:1 appointments and group workshops, available both in person and online.

If you're interested in starting your own venture, our Student Enterprise team can support you to launch a business, lead a social enterprise, become freelance or self-employed, or build essential enterprise skills.

MyCareer is your online careers platform, allowing you to easily book appointments, search for graduate jobs, internships and part-time roles, register for events and skills workshops, and browse a wide range of other opportunities.

### Career Choice

If you're considering which career you'd like to pursue after graduating, you can talk to an adviser or have a look at our subject-specific career information pages: **www.southampton.ac.uk/subjectcareers**

### Careers, Employability and Student Enterprise Website

Our website provides further information about the services and opportunities we have on offer: **www.southampton.ac.uk/careers**

### MyCareer

Use MyCareer to arrange appointments, find graduate roles, internships and part-time work, and register for workshops and events: **mycareer.soton.ac.uk**

### Successful Futures

Use the Successful Futures Pathway to help you evaluate, develop and articulate your skills. Find out more: **www.southampton.ac.uk/successfulfutures**

### Talk to an Adviser

If you would like to talk to an adviser, visit this page to find out how to book an appointment. This service is available to current students and to alumni for up to five years after graduation: **www.southampton.ac.uk/career-advice**

Founding member of

RUSSELL GROUP

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