## UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI CAREER SERVICES:

## Advice on writing covering letter and CV

### Covering letter

The key focus of your covering letter should be to persuade the prospective employer to invite you to an interview. Therefore, you must demonstrate that you have the skills and abilities needed in performing the job successfully. A covering letter is always written for a particular job. Do not send copies of the same covering letter to many employers. Take time to write a new letter for each job opportunity. The employer will respect the time and effort you have put into it.

### Keep in Mind

- Find information about the company or the organisation you wish to work for. Do they have a mission statement? Who should you address your covering letter to?
- Keep it short and simple. Covering letter should be no longer that one page (4–6 paragraphs).
- Provide examples of your past achievements
- Visual appearance is important. Do not use a small font size. Leave space for margins.
- Remember the employer's point of view: What do you have to offer?
- Do not copy a sample covering letter. Samples are only to give you ideas on what sort of things to include, you do not need to copy them from word to word. Make the covering letter look like your own; reveal your personality.

### CV

Curriculum Vitae or CV is more than summary of your life. It is your marketing tool. CV has to be easy to read and visually effective. Student or graduate CV´s should not be longer than two pages. Write in plain language and use action words (I participated, initiated, obtained, investigated, evaluated etc). The curriculum vitae should be written in a reverse chronological order (i.e. the most recent experience first).

There are different formats to writing a CV, such as the chronological CV and the skills-based CV. The following sample is a combination of these two. It is good for most situations.

**Sample CV**

---

CURRICULUM VITAE
Date

Photo

Name

Address
Telephone number

E-mail
Date and place of birth:
Nationality:

**Education**

**yyyy–**

**List your current studies and all degrees you have completed after secondary school in reverse chronological order.**

Give the year of graduation, name of degree, name of university/ educational institution, and a brief description of your studies (majors, minors, student exchange, honours, topic of you thesis etc.).

**yyyy**

**You do not need give a list of courses you have taken or mention grades.** Instead, you can list your additional education / special courses (not included in your degrees) under one title, "Courses", for instance.

**Work experience**

**mm/yyyy–mm/yyyy**

**List your work experience in reverse chronological order.**

State the job title, name of the employer and dates of employment. There is usually no need to mention exact dates, month and year will do. Give a brief description of your tasks and responsibilities. Use action verbs (I participated, initiated, obtained, investigated, evaluated etc.).

**mm/yyyy–mm/yyyy**

**You do not need to give full details of all previous work experience.**

Emphasise the experience that is relevant for the job you are now applying for and any work you have done in Finland.

**mm/yyyy–mm/yyyy**
**mm/yyyy–mm/yyyy**

**Sometimes it is best to combine several work experiences** under one title if you have lots of similar work experience.

**Language skills**

List languages and estimate the level of command (native language/elementary/intermediate/fluent).

**Computer skills**

Describe your skills. You can list the most important programs you have used.

**Activities / Interests / Volunteer work**

What are your hobbies?
Have you been active in any organizations?
Have you done volunteer work?

**References**

Ask if some (1–4) of your former supervisors/colleagues/professors are willing to speak on your behalf. Put their details down as referees (name, title, phone number, e-mail). Always ask the person before naming them your referee. "References" is the last title of CV.

**You might also want to mention:**

– Special skills, specialization
– Career goals / career objectives
– Publications and awards
– living or working abroad
– Military or civil service

**Sample covering letter**

---

JOB APPLICATION
Date

Your name
Street address
Postal address
Phone number
E-mail address

Title and name of the receiver
Name of company / organisation
Street address
Postal address

JOB TITLE

1st paragraph
How did you find out about the job?
Why are you interested in working for this particular employer?
Why are you interested in this particular job opening?
What is your motivation for applying for this job?

2nd-4th paragraph
What are your qualifications for this job?
Have you done something similar in the past?
Describe your expertise related to this line of work whether it is work experience, theoretical knowledge, volunteer work experience, language or computer skills or something you have learned in your leisure time activities.

Next paragraph
What are you like as a person?
Do not only list adjectives but illustrate them with examples.
What is your work style?
Do you perform best when working independently or in a group?
If your former colleagues have given you positive feedback, use it here.

Last paragraph
What happens next?
Will you contact them or will you wait for an invitation to an interview?
State your salaries wish if asked to do so.
What is the best way to reach you?
When would you be able to start?

Sincerely yours / Kind regards,

Signature
Your name typewritten

Enclosure: CV