

Internship Information for GJU Students

Part 2: The cover letter

Besides the CV, the cover letter is the most important part of your application. Here you can show why YOU are the best suited person for the advertised position. However, human resource employees only spend short time on reading the cover letter. Therefore it is important that you create the letter as interesting and short as possible that you can arouse the staff manager's interest.

Be careful with copy and paste. You will be applying for an internship in many companies. So you probably won't get around copying and pasting some data from one into another application. That's okay, as long as it fits. But always read it again very carefully. Always pay the utmost attention that the right company and contact person are named in the cover letter!

Formal tips

Length

Your cover letter should not be longer than one page. That means that you have space for approx. four to eight sentences in the body text.

Text arrangement

You should rather use left justification than full justification. That makes the document appear livelier. Use hyphenation, but don't rely on the automatic one your word-processing program suggests you. Always check by reading it again.

Font/Font size

You should continuously use one default font (e.g. Calibri, Arial, Tahoma or Verdana). The font size should be 11-12 points.

Paragraphs

Also make reasonable paragraphs within the text! That makes the text clearer arranged and hence better to be read by the human resource employee.

Line pitch

You should choose a single-spaced line pitch within the cover letter.

Language

Do not use any abbreviations in your entire cover letter! You should also avoid repeating the word "ich" – above all at the beginning of the sentences.

For structuring letters, in Germany we have a system of rules called DIN 5008. In this system everything from structuring dates up to orders in a letter is written down there. You can look the rules up online on www.din5008.de. Primarily IT students should stick to those rules, but it's also helpful for all other students.

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Structure of content

Page header

You can create a page header for your personal data. The page header should visually be well-integrated into the general view of the cover letter. The page header's font size can be a bit smaller than the font size of the rest of the text. It's advisable to use the same page header for your CV.

The particular elements of the page header are:

- First name and last name
- Address (street, house number, postal code, city)
- Phone number
- Email address (use the same legitimate email address as in the CV!)

The company's name and address

Your application should be addressed to a concrete person (e.g. the staff manager). You can find this person's name in the job advertisement or on the company's web page. If you do not find any information you can call the company and ask for the name of the contact person. Make sure to write the company's name and address correctly.

Example:

Stadtwerte München	(company name)
Frau Christa Rösner	(contact person)
Personalpolitik/Personalmarketing	(department)
Emmy-Noether-Straße 2	(street and house number)
80287 München	(postal code and city)

Subject line

The subject line should always contain the following information (if available):

- Precise job title
- Reference number (companies often identify internships with a reference number, a job number or an application number)
- Where did you find the advertisement? (name the newspaper or the web page)
- Publication date of the internship offer

Always emphasize the subject line visually by using bold text.

Example:

Bewerbung um ein Praktikum im Bereich Softwareentwicklung (Java) ab März 2011
hier: Ihre Anzeige in der Süddeutschen Zeitung vom 13.01.2011

Salutation

Instead of "Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren" ("Dear Ladies and Gentlemen") use a personal salutation like "Sehr geehrte Frau Müller" ("Dear Mrs. Müller"). The contact person's name should be mentioned in the company's address and in the salutation.

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Text

In first place you should refer to the advertisement and give reasons for your interest in the advertised internship. Also try to arouse the staff manager's interest from the very beginning. Therefore you should absolutely relinquish standard phrases (example: I hereby apply for...). Instead of this use a friendly introduction that is individually fitted to the employer (example: You are looking for an intern...).

If you have already contacted the company (e.g. via phone or e-mail) you can refer to that in the beginning (e. g. "Thank you for today's kind and informative telephone call. As requested ...").

In the body text of the cover letter you must try to present your skills and characteristics in short and precise sentences. And do not forget to state convincing reasons for your skills and characteristics!

Also briefly outline your former jobs/internships and implicitly try to refer to the internship you are applying for.

It is very important that you do not only repeat your CV in the cover letter. Note the requirements profile in the internship offer! Show and justify that you can fulfill this profile and that you are the right person for this internship. You may also mention personal goals as long as you stay realistic.

In the end you should summarize the aspects which speak in your favor. After that, express friendly and politely the wish for an interview!

The text should answer the following questions:

- Why do you apply for the advertised internship? What is the most interesting thing about the internship for you?
- Which experiences that might be relevant for this internship have you already made?
- Which characteristics describe you best? (Reason!)
- What are your personal goals?
- Why and how do you fulfill the requirements mentioned in the offer?
- Why are especially you the right person for the position?

Complimentary close and signature

Here you should use the standard phrase "Mit freundlichen Grüßen" ("Yours sincerely").

Sign the cover letter handwritten with your first name and last name. Scan in your signature when applying online.

Appendices

You do not need to list which appendices you have attached to your application. It will do to mention the hint "Anlagen" ("Appendices") below your signature.

The cover sheet

If you decide to create a cover sheet the following information should be contained on the cover sheet:

- Name
- Address
- Phone number
- E-mail address
- Company's name
- Precise job title

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Furthermore, you also have the possibility to affix your passport photo to the cover sheet instead of to the CV.

Mainly when you're applying for a job you have to be creative in, you can already show your potential employer that you are creative by designing a beautiful cover sheet. But always remember that the design of it still has to be appropriate (e. g. don't use too many colours, fonts and font sizes). If you're applying for a job in the medical sector, a simple cover sheet will do.

Checklist: Cover letter

- ☐ Your page is formatted according to the standard and there are proper paragraphs in the text.
- ☐ The cover letter has the same format as your CV.
- ☐ Your cover letter is not longer than one page.
- ☐ The text is formatted with the single-spaced line pitch.
- ☐ The font is used continuous and has size 11-12 points.
- ☐ You avoided abbreviations and repetitions of the word "I".
- ☐ You have finally checked the entire document for mistakes (in grammar, spelling and format).
- ☐ A well-arranged and an attractive page header with all the contact information in it is on top of the cover letter.
- ☐ The company's name and address are correctly adopted from the advertisement and you have added the name of the responsible person to it.
- ☐ All necessary information is included in the bold subject heading.
- ☐ You chose a personal salutation instead of "Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren" ("Dear Ladies and Gentlemen").
- ☐ You picked an individual introduction for the body text without standard phrases.
- ☐ In the case of an earlier contact to the company, you referred to the phone call or the e-mail.
- ☐ You explain why you are interested in the company and the internship.
- ☐ You briefly listed your previous jobs/internships and experiences that refer to the job you're now applying for (no complete repetition of the CV!).
- ☐ You always refer to the company's requirements in the advertisement while mentioning your personal skills, strengths and social skills.
- ☐ Convincing reasons to confirm all your statements are noted.
- ☐ You explain why especially you are the right person for the position.
- ☐ In the end you politely expressed the wish for an interview.
- ☐ Your cover letter is complementarily closed with "Mit freundlichen Grüßen" ("Yours sincerely")?

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- ☐ When sending the application per email, you have scanned in and pasted your signature on bottom of the cover letter.
- ☐ The current date is noted on the cover letter.

Tip

Also let German friends and contacts from your university (e.g. Career Center) or the Project Office of the German-Jordanian University in Magdeburg (e-mail: interns@german-jordanian.org) check your cover letter and where applicable correct it!

Appendix: Sample cover letter