



Career Development Faculty Facilitator Guide



Cover
letters

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The information contained here represents the common guidance that Career Development coaches share with students and alumni when reviewing and assisting with cover letters.

DO STUDENTS REALLY NEED A COVER LETTER?

Include a cover letter **unless** the job posting specifies not to include one (be sure to follow the job application/posting instructions).

The cover letter:

- Introduces them as a candidate and targets their resumé to a specific position within a company
- Demonstrates their written communication and analytical skills
- Asks for an interview

GENERAL TIPS

- Customize the cover letter for each application
- The salutation is to the 'Hiring Manager' or 'Human Resources' if there is no individual contact name
- Full sentences, in paragraph format, have been used rather than bullet points
- Experiences and skills relating to the job requirements have been highlighted and expanded on
- Keywords found in the job description e.g. safety, communication, sales, customer service, have been included
- Spelling, grammar, punctuation, structure, and style have been carefully reviewed

COVER LETTER HEADING

- The cover letter heading should be identical to the one used on the resumé. This ensures that the student's information is consistent in all of their job search documents. See the Resumé Guide for specific guidelines on information to include as well as formatting suggestions.
- Address is optional

Examples

KELLY STEVENS

123 Main Street, Oshawa, ON L1H 1K0 905-555-1234 kstevens@gmail.com

KELLY STEVENS

905-555-1234 • kstevens@gmail.com • www.linkedin.com/kstevens

DATE and INSIDE INFORMATION

Date

- The date when the application is being officially submitted is the date that should be included on the cover letter.
- Only month, date, and year need to be included.

Inside Information

- If available, this section should contain the full contact information for the individual who will be making the hiring decision. This includes first and last name, job title, company name, street address, city, province and postal code.
- If an individual's name is not available, the first two lines (see example below) can be skipped and begin instead with the company name.
- If the company does not provide the full address, the applicant should find it online and still include it in the cover letter.

Example

December 29, 2019

Janet McMichael
Director, Business Development
ABC Assurance
1234 Main Street
Oshawa, ON L0L 1L0

SALUTATION

- If an individual's name has been provided for the application, the salutation can be listed as Dear Mr. LAST NAME or Dear Ms LAST NAME. Women are generally addressed as Ms, rather than Miss. or Mrs.
- If a name is not available, Attention Human Resources or Attention Hiring Manager are appropriate options.
- Generic salutations such as 'Dear Sir or Madam' or 'To Whom It May Concern' are not recommended.

REFERRAL LINE

- A line mentioning the position being applied for, and competition number if provided, can be included in bold below the salutation and before the cover letter begins.

Example

Re: Accounts Payable Clerk - Competition #2016-45

FIRST PARAGRAPH

- The first paragraph of the cover letter should target the company and the position being applied for in a way that effectively captures the attention of the reader.
- The first paragraph is typically composed of 2 – 3 sentences in total:
 - The first sentence should state job title being applied for and where / how they heard about the opportunity.
 - The next one to two sentences should state **WHY** they are interested in the specific job / company. This indicates that the student has done some research into the company and has personalized the cover letter.

Common Errors:

- Listing the incorrect company name or position as a result of not properly updating the letter from an older version.
- Emphasizing “what’s in it for them” rather than focusing on which of their skills and experiences could benefit the organization.

Suggested Sentences – First Sentence

- Please accept this letter and resumé as my application for the position of _____ with _____.
- My proven track record of successfully performing _____ makes me an ideal candidate for the _____ opportunity that you have advertised.
- Please accept my application for the _____ position advertised on _____.
- I recently met with _____ from your organization, and he/she strongly recommended that I send you my resumé.
- During your visit to Durham College last fall, I had the pleasure of learning about your organization and the varied experiences offered to new graduates.
- My recently completed education in _____ and my experience with _____ make me a strong candidate for the position of _____ with _____.
- As a Durham College graduate from _____, I have been hoping to find the kind of position you have recently posted on _____.
- In response to the advertised position on the _____ website, please consider my resumé in your search for a _____.
- I was pleased to hear from _____ that you will soon have a vacancy for a _____.
- As a recent graduate of Durham College’s _____ program, I offer solid academic credentials as well as industry experience gained from a field placement at _____.

Suggested Sentences – Next Sentence(s) of the Opening Paragraph

- Having recently read an article highlighting your company's plans for expansion, I am writing to inquire if this will involve an increase in personnel.
- Your company is truly a leader in _____ and I would welcome the opportunity to utilize my education to learn and grow in this area.
- From my research on your site, I found that we both believe that the path to revenue-goal attainment begins with providing exemplary client care.
- Given the opportunity, I know that my strong _____ foundation would benefit your department, customers and the bottom line.
- I am very interested in this position because _____, and I think that my education and experience would be an asset to your company.

SECOND and THIRD PARAGRAPHS

- The middle paragraphs are very important because this is where the student demonstrated that they have customized their cover letter to each job posting.
- Applicants can draw on experiences from work, school, volunteer opportunities, and field placement(s).
- To help create an effective cover letter, it is helpful for the student to think about how and where they have demonstrated related skills and experiences, and then make sure that these are clearly stated in the letter.

Common Errors:

- Generic cover letters that could have been written for any job or organization.
- Repeating information directly from the resumé without elaborating on key experiences.
- Using weak language throughout:
 - Examples:
 - I feel....
 - I may...
 - I might...
- Poor sentence structure:
 - Overuse of "I" at the beginning of sentences
 - Too many short sentences that are lacking flow from one idea to the next
 - Sentences that ramble without purpose or focus
 - Grammar and spelling errors

Writing Strategies

- The middle paragraphs are strongest when they have been targeted to the specific qualifications listed in the job posting. To accomplish this, Career Development recommends that students create a Skills Matching Chart as demonstrated below.

Skills Matching Chart	
Job	Me
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List every skill / qualification required as described in the job posting • List every duty required for the job <p><i>If there is no job description for the position, this chart can still be completed but applicants will need to look for similar postings at other organizations to generate sample wording.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the right hand side, applicants should compile a brief list of how their background matches each requirement from the job posting. • These points will then be used to create content for the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs

Suggested Sentences – Middle Paragraphs

- In April, I will graduate from Durham College with a diploma in _____. My courses have provided me with a valuable educational background as well as thorough training in _____ and _____.
- In addition to operating a _____, I am experienced in using a _____. I have also had training in / on _____ and _____.
- As a recent graduate in _____, I am qualified in the areas of _____.
- My experience and skills have prepared me well for this position. My strengths that are relevant to the position include _____.
- As you will see from my resumé, I have gained extensive experience through my education and field placements. Specifically, _____.
- I am a dedicated employee with experience / knowledge as a _____.
- I have always set high standards and strived for the top and consistently achieved my goals. For example, _____.

FINAL PARAGRAPH

- The final paragraph of the cover letter thanks the employer for their consideration and indicates the best contact method for scheduling an interview.

Common Errors:

- Providing too many details on availability
 - Example: I can be reached during business hours from Monday to Friday at 905.999.9999 or after 8:00 p.m. at 647.999.9999 or anytime by email at kelly.stevens@gmail.com.
- Not asking for the opportunity to interview
- Not thanking the employer for their time and consideration

SUGGESTED SENTENCES - CLOSING PARAGRAPH

- I would like to have the opportunity to speak with you about this position. I am available during the day at (telephone number) or by email at (professional email address).
- I look forward to a positive reply to my application and the opportunity for a personal interview.
- Thank you for your consideration of my application for employment with (company name).
- I look forward to meeting you to discuss the employment opportunities with (company name). You may reach me at (telephone number) or (professional email address).
- I can be reached at _____.

CLOSING

- Cover letters should conclude with a business appropriate closing phrase as well as the applicant's name and signature (signature is optional).

Example of Emailed / Online Submission:

Sincerely,

Type your name in italics

Example of Paper Submission:

Yours truly,

(allow 3-5 blank lines and sign your name in ink)

Type your name

SAMPLE COVER LETTER – RESPONSE TO POSTING

KELLY STEVENS

123 Main Street, Oshawa, ON L1H 1K0 905-555-1234 kstevens@gmail.com

December 29, 2019

Janet McMichael
Director, Business Development
ABC Assurance
1234 Main Street
Oshawa, ON L0L 1L0

Dear Ms McMichael,

Re: Marketing Assistant - Competition # 4321

Please accept this application for the position of marketing assistant as recently advertised on Durham College's Hired site. While researching ABC Assurance, I found that the company is opening up new operations internationally, and I would welcome the opportunity to contribute my education and experience to the organizational goals as the marketing assistant.

Recently, I completed the Business Administration - Marketing Advanced Diploma program through Durham College. I gained a strong interest in business development within the financial sector through my involvement in a group project that highlighted the realities - rewards and challenges - within the field. Having completed several marketing group projects and presentations, you will find my abilities to communicate effectively and to accomplish group tasks are excellent. I may be counted upon to work effectively independently while contributing to the overall strategic goals of your organization. In addition, I have mastered the current social media marketing techniques that you require, allowing me to become immediately productive within ABC Assurance.

While working in the hospitality sector, my customer service skills were demonstrated through consistent customer satisfaction, while my interpersonal and selling skills allowed me to regularly exceed sales targets. Additionally, I have proven organizational skills gained through scheduling 14 staff in the retail environment.

With my experience and enthusiasm, I would be an effective marketing assistant within ABC Assurance. Please contact me at 905-555-1234 to arrange an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kelly Stevens

SAMPLE COVER LETTER – NO POSTING

Bob Banter

(905) 555-3453 b.banter@email.com

January 5, 2019

Jane Smith
Production Manager
XYZ Injection Moulds Ltd.
389 Princess Avenue
Kingston, ON L0L 0L0

Dear Ms Smith:

I am a recent graduate of Durham College with a Mechanical Engineering Technology Advanced Diploma. While researching potential career opportunities, I discovered that XYZ is one of the most competitive in the plastics industry in Canada, placing great value on its people and the company vision. I am seeking an entry-level opportunity within your Engineering department and submit my resumé for your consideration.

My training and knowledge in providing technical support and service using the most current technology and standards would make me a strong asset to XYZ Injection Moulds Ltd. Specifically, my analytical skills allow me to solve engineering challenges involving fluid-thermal sciences. In addition, I can create, modify and improve engineering designs using both conventional and computer-based methods as needed. By performing engineering tests and failure analysis, my work will provide your engineers with more time to do their work.

Through my field placement in research and development, I became very comfortable working in a professional office environment and my attention to detail, interpersonal and communication skills were greatly enhanced.

I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss my qualifications. You may reach me at (905) 555-3453. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bob Banter

CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

What we do

The Career Development office has a team of coaches ready to assist, guide and encourage Durham College students and graduates to:

- Explore their potential career paths, assess their personal traits, skill sets and values
- Discover what employers are looking for in new recruits, and the art of networking and building industry relationships
- Learn to translate their academic experiences into resumes and professional letters
- Prepare for job interviews and achieve success in the workplace

What we offer students

- One-to-one appointments for job search guidance, cover letter and resumé coaching, interview techniques, and mock interviews
- Career coaching, including assessments and access to Career Cruising for students who are unsure about their career options, or wanting to reaffirm their goals
- Employer recruitment events such as job fairs and information sessions
- Access to Career Development in-person and online via DC's Hired site.
 - By using their MyCampus credentials students can log on to Hired to research career resources, book appointments, view the event calendar, register for events
 - Students enjoy exclusive access to job postings for full-time, part-time, summer, volunteer and on-campus opportunities. New job postings can automatically be emailed to students once a job alert has been created

What we offer faculty

- A variety of career development workshops delivered by Career Development coaches in your classroom
- The ability to book all your career development workshops online through the Hired site
- Assistance in hosting employer panels and industry events upon request
- Access to our extensive online career resources detailing industry information specific to DC post-secondary programs
- A place to refer students questioning their program choices or looking for career information

What we ask of faculty

Let students know about us early and encourage them to meet with a Career Development coach to begin working on their career success plan. Students who have a career goal are more inclined to persist and succeed in their programs. If students have questions or even doubts about a career path, our coaches can assist by helping students clarify their career options.



CAREER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

Booking information is available on DC's Hired site – <http://hired.durhamcollege.ca>

Get Hired - Introduction to Career Development

This workshop showcases the benefits of using the services of Career Development and the Hired site.

Resumés - The employers' perspective

This workshop will provide added value by helping students view their resumé from the employers' perspective. Students are invited to actively participate; ideally, students should have a basic understanding of how to create a resumé and come prepared with an industry-specific job posting and a copy of their resumé.

Cover letters – From applicant to potential candidate

This workshop will provide added value by helping students view their cover letter from the employers' perspective. Students are invited to actively participate; ideally, students should have a basic understanding of how to create a cover letter and come prepared with an industry-specific job posting and a copy of their cover letter.

Networking – Communicate your brand

This workshop will introduce networking as an important practice in the workplace.

LinkedIn

This workshop will familiarize students with LinkedIn as an effective job search and networking tool.

Tough interview questions – How to answer them

This workshop will provide added value by helping students with tough interview questions often asked by employers. Students are invited to actively participate; ideally, should have a basic understanding of interview formats and expectations.

CONTACT US

Oshawa campus

Student Services building, Room SSB212

Whitby campus

Coaching and Support Centre, Room 180

Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

905.721.3034

careerdevelopment@durhamcollege.ca

www.durhamcollege.ca/careerdevelopment

<http://hired.durhamcollege.ca>