

How to Write a Competitive Cover Letter

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BIO
SCI

UC San Diego
BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

General Guidelines

- Your cover letter is your chance to **1) tell your story**, and **2) show the company how your personal values align with theirs**.
- **How to tell your story:** in a few sentences in the second paragraph, sum up your relevant experience by explaining how it relates to the company and the job description (“My experience in XYZ Lab provided me with excellent team collaboration skills in order to [insert job function].”). The more unique your story and skills are, the better.
- **How to show the company how your personal values align with theirs:** Research the company’s values and describe how they fit your own values. (“As a volunteer at XYZ Hospital, I learned through caring for Patient X just how much the patient experience matters. I am therefore confident that I can also elevate the patient experience as [insert position title].”)

Melissa Hoon

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October 16, 2020

Dear Hiring Manager:

I’m thrilled to have the opportunity to apply to the Lab Assistant internship position at Thermo Fisher Scientific that I learned about through Handshake. I spoke with the recruiter, Jane Doe, about the position and about the company’s goals. Based on what I learned, I believe my education and experience make me an excellent candidate for the position.

I understand that Thermo Fisher strives to help its customers create a healthier, safer and cleaner world. I have developed similar values as a student pursuing my B.S. in biology at UC San Diego, which is one reason I think I would excel in the Lab Assistant role. For example, as a competitor in the Biotechathon, a UC San Diego life sciences competition judged by industry professionals, I won first place for my project on healthy air quality solutions, proving my commitment to environmental health and safety. Furthermore, as a Lab Assistant in the Pogliano Lab, I developed basic lab skills such as analyzing and recording data, PCR and specimen processing, which has provided me with the foundation to go above and beyond requirements of the Lab Assistant role at Thermo Fisher.

In addition, in my role as Vice President of BioScholars at UC San Diego and as a Patient Education Center Volunteer at Moores Cancer Center, I developed leadership, time management, organization skills that I would apply to my role as Lab Assistant at Thermo Fisher. For example, I collaborated with industry partners, students and faculty to organize a BioScholars conference, and efficiently organized education materials for Moores Cancer Center patients so that they could have the most informative and comfortable position possible. These skills would help me collaborate effectively in a lab setting when collaborating with others and also when taking initiative, which I understand is required at Thermo Fisher.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the chance to learn more about the role from you and further discuss my experience in an interview.

Sincerely,

Melissa Hoon

Format

- Use business letter format, block style, with everything beginning at the left margin (do not indent).
- Use 1.0 inch margins, size 11 font and the same font that you wrote your resume in (easy-to-read font)
- Include your name and contact information at the top in the exact same way you did on your resume (name, address, phone, email, LinkedIn)
- Include a horizontal line underneath your contact information
- After the horizontal line, include the date fully right-aligned: October 16, 2020 (do not abbreviate the month or write it as a number)
- The salutation must be formal (Dear Ms. Hoon:). If you do not know the hiring manager's name or their preferred gender identification, write Dear Hiring Manager:
- Your cover letter will have four paragraphs. Content is explained in the next slides.
- Close your cover letter by writing the word Sincerely, followed by a comma. Then hit Enter four times and type your first and last name.
- Follow the sample cover letter on the first slide of this presentation for correct formatting.

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First Paragraph

- The first sentence needs to include: your enthusiasm for applying to the position, the position you are applying to, the company you are applying to and how you found out about the position. Example: I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to apply to the Lab Assistant position at Thermo Fisher Scientific that I learned about through Handshake.
- If you've spoken with a recruiter or anyone at the company, include that in the first paragraph. See sample cover letter on the first slide of this presentation as an example.
- State in a very concise, thesis-style way why you think your education and experience make you an excellent candidate for the position.

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Second and Third Paragraphs

- Tie your qualifications to what you know about the position or organization. Focus on your skills, education, and experience from your resume. Emphasize your strongest attributes that relate to the position. If you have any directly related experience or education, summarize it here so that the reader can be looking for it in your resume.
- Explain why you are interested in this role.
- Make sure you explain why your values are aligned with the company's mission and values.
- Review sample cover letter on the first slide of this presentation as an example.

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Closing/Fourth Paragraph

- Thank the hiring manager
- Restate why you'd like to be hired
- Welcome an interview
- Do not include your contact information – they already have it in your resume
- Example: Thank you for your time and consideration. I strongly believe that my experience in [list overview of experience] make me an excellent candidate for [position title]. I look forward to the chance to interview with you and your company.

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Signature

- Write the word Sincerely, followed by a comma. Hit enter four times, then type your first and last name:

Sincerely,

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Copy Editing

- Proof-read your cover letter very carefully to check for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors
- Read your cover letter out loud to make sure everything is written properly
- Have someone else review your cover letter for spelling, grammar, punctuation and formatting
- Review these slides and samples of each section as examples to see how things need to be formatted and written

Cover Letter Review

- Once you write, format and thoroughly copy edit your cover letter according to all guidelines in this presentation, you may email it to Melissa Hoon at mhoon@ucsd.edu to review (send as a pdf).
- Alternatively, you can schedule an appointment through Handshake with a career coach at the UC San Diego Career Center.