

DOCUMENTS NECESSARY FOR THE JOB SEARCH

When applying for a job, it is standard practice to submit a Curriculum Vitae (CV) with an accompanying covering letter. Some companies and organizations, however, require in addition that applicants complete an application form. It is vital to a successful job search that great care is taken in the writing or completion of all these documents as they serve as the means of introducing and marketing yourself to a potential future employer.

Change the World

NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY



Enquiries

Student Counselling, Career and Development
Centre
Nelson Mandela University

<http://counselling.mandela.ac.za>

counselling@mandela.ac.za



mandela.ac.za

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THE APPLICATION FORM

This is a printed form requesting all sorts of information from you. Your biographical details, work experience, education, achievements and paragraphs describing your personal development. Let the application form be a convincing commercial for you as they are designed and used to screen you out rather than in, so you need to put much thought and research into answering each question.

Preparation

Collect together all the facts and information needed to fill in the form e.g. dates, holiday job details, references, certificates, reports, your CV and put them together in a file.

Find out about the company you are applying to before filling in the form.

Read through the form a couple of times to make sure you understand what the selectors' requirements are and what all the questions and instructions mean.

Communicating effectively

Always provide detailed information – make good use of space provided for each answer by being as comprehensive as possible. Use good presentation and style e.g. use black ink, fill in the form neatly check spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Make sure that whatever you say about yourself is relevant to the specific job or position for which you are applying.

Give concrete evidence of the claims you make about yourself. Always emphasise your positive points and make less of the negative things

If asked to write a paragraph about yourself, try to bring in the unique attributes and strengths you can offer that make you stand out from other applicants.

Enclose copies of any required documents with your application.

Note that when you sign an application form, you are signing a legal document and you are confirming that what you have written is true.

On completion of the form

Make a copy of the completed form to keep before submitting it as you might need to refer to it should you be called for an interview.

Make sure you send it to the correct person and address as requested on the form.

Allow enough time for it to reach its destination before the closing date – allow time for slow mail.

Other options could be to deliver the form by hand

If you are not successful with your application, don't despair – keep trying

THE COVERING LETTER

This is a very important letter. It is a formal letter in which you apply for the job or position and present yourself for the first time to a prospective employer. It is the letter that introduces you and your CV to the employer and through which you market yourself. Although short, usually about one page, it is the first impression that a prospective employer will get of you. It must convince the employer of your value as a prospective employee and motivate them to want to find out more about you by reading through your CV.

A good covering letter must therefore:

Be interesting

Be work-centered and employer-centered, showing how your skills, strengths and knowledge relate to the position

Emphasize transferable work experience and skills

Highlight your positive attributes

Structure of a covering letter

introduction, in which you state why you are writing the letter and who you are

middle section, in which you provide information about why you think you should be considered for the job. Here you need to relate your skills, knowledge and abilities to the requirements of the employer. You can also point out any relevant training or work experience you've had and highlight appropriate extramural activities. In this section you need to convince the employer of your ability and suitability for the job;

conclusion, in which you state that you are enclosing your CV and that you are willing to attend an interview. End the letter with a final sentence in which you thank the recipient for considering your application, followed by an appropriate closing, your signature and typed name at the end.

Important points to remember:

The language should be simple, direct and professional.

Check spelling, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation and format.

Date the letter for the day on which you plan to post it.

Find out the name of the appropriate person and address the letter to them. If you cannot obtain this information, address the letter to the Human Resources or Personnel Manager.

Type and print the letter. Always sign the letter in ink above your typed name.

Provide a heading for your letter so that the reader knows what the letter is about immediately.

It is preferable to apply for a particular position or type of position, not just for anything that might be available.

Keep the letter to one page in length if possible.

Remember to include contact information.

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

There is no ultimate correct way of setting out a CV. The main point is that it is clear and easy to read, it shows your academic progress and achievements, important skills and activities you participate in, and any work experience you have had, however little this might have been.

The only personal details that you need to provide are your full name, address and telephone number and email address. It is no longer necessary to provide biographical details such as age, race, sex or marital status.

Under education list all your educational qualifications, including training courses you may have completed, at secondary and tertiary level.

Under work experience, include vacation and part-time work as well as full-time jobs. Do not omit jobs because they seem menial – all experience is valuable. State the name and location of your employer, title of the job or area of work, and period of employment.

Activities and interests with possible leadership roles and special achievements are important. Always focus on those that will be most relevant to the job.

It is important that you reflect on the particular skills learned or developed from the activities and the work experience you gained.

Tailor your information to the particular job for which you are applying

Always update your CV on a regular basis

References: Supply the names, designation and telephone numbers of no more than three referees – one should be an academic and someone you have worked for.

If you think or know that a license is needed, be sure to mention that you have one on your CV

Be unique and interesting so the employer notices you.

Staple the CV pages together at the top left corner.

Layout is important. Use a simple font and wide margins. Use bold print, underlining, italics and capital letters for emphasis.

The cover page of your CV should contain your name and the words "Curriculum Vitae". Make sure your name and contact details are also at the top of the first page of your CV.