

Career Peer Mentors

Tips to Assess and Approve Cover Letters

Step 1. Identify the job's desired skills: Ask the student to **highlight** the position's required skills and background on an actual job opening for the targeted field.

Step 2. Scan for the targeted skills in the cover letter: Turning to the cover letter, ask the student to **highlight** each instance that the job opening's key requirements appear in their document. How much overlap is there between the two? Brainstorm additional ways that the student's skills match the opening.

Step 3. Mine the resume: Comb through the student's resume for additional applicable skills. Avoid repeating specific resume phrasing; cover letters highlight related skill themes running through the resume (2 or more demonstrations of specific skill strengths). See examples on *Moving from Resume Tasks to Cover Letter Themes* to understand the difference, then walk students through an example or two using the blank worksheet on its back.

Step 4. When ready, refer to the e-tool: Working with the student, use the Professional Competency cover letter rubric (login through <https://careercenter.hanover.edu/students/pctools>) to score cover letters. See the back for brief explanations of each cover letter e-tool factor.

Step 5. Giving approval: Upload docs at every visit. In order to have an "approved" cover letter, using the e-tool, students will need to have:

- a high score for each of the italicized items, which are essential, and
- a score of moderate or higher for the remaining items on the e-tool.

When students complete the tool and hit the "submit" button, the automatic response will tell them they have a "great cover letter" only if they have scores equal to or above those to the right below (including a high on each of the 3 essential factors). However, "great" is not required for the assignment (see bullets above).

When completed, record the *approval in the student's appointment entry as a record for the professor.*

Additionally, write "Approved" on the cover letter, sign and date it, and give it to them to document that they have fulfilled the requirement.

Good enough to approve

Evaluate your cover letter:

For each item below, use the slider to indicate how effectively you demonstrated that aspect in your strength on each item. Those in *italics* are considered essential for mastery of this competency. The closer to **low** your rating, the less effectively you applied the aspect in your cover letter.

The closer to **high** your rating, the more effectively you applied the aspect in your cover letter.

Low	Rating	High	Cover Letter
<input type="range"/>			You have written your letter to a specific individual for a specific position with a clear message to the person's likely job title, e.g., "Dear Internship Coordinator."
<input type="range"/>			You emphasize your three greatest strengths relative to the position.
<input type="range"/>			<i>You make it explicitly clear in what ways your background matches the position.</i>
<input type="range"/>			<i>You focus on ways in which you can benefit the employer rather than just your own needs.</i>
<input type="range"/>			Your letter is well-written and free of typographical errors.
<input type="range"/>			Your letter matches your resume in font style and size, if printed or formatted.
<input type="range"/>			You address the ways you plan to follow-up after the letter is sent.

[Save Your Assessment](#)

Great

Evaluate your cover letter:

For each item below, use the slider to indicate how effectively you demonstrated that aspect in your strength on each item. Those in *italics* are considered essential for mastery of this competency. The closer to **low** your rating, the less effectively you applied the aspect in your cover letter.

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Explanations of the E-tool's Cover Letter Factors

(excerpted from *Cover Letter Guide*)

You have written your letter to a specific individual for a specific position. If this is impossible to find, you have addressed your message to the person's likely job title, e.g., "Dear Internship Coordinator."

Address your letter to an actual person, preferably to one who is in the position to hire you. If not specified by the job ad, check LinkedIn or Google, or if practical, contact the organization to request the name (and correct spelling) of the manager in charge of the department you wish to work for. If you cannot find a specific name, address your letter to the head of the office, "Dear Hiring Manager:" or "Dear Internship Coordinator:" (**using a colon rather than a comma at the end**). Avoid "To whom it may concern."

You emphasize your three greatest strengths relative to the position, giving at least one full sentence to each. (Note that this factor and the one that follows are closely related.)

First, zero in on all of your related strengths: read the job opening carefully to find the targeted skills, then inventory your own background for your matching skills. For example, if they ask for (and you have) organizational and communication skills, describe them each in a separate sentence: "I have proven organizational skills" or "I have demonstrated my strong communication skills". See *Cover Letter Guide*, page 4 ("Before you Begin") and page 5 ("Paragraph 2") and *Moving from Resume Tasks to Cover Letter Themes* for help with this factor.

You make it explicitly clear in what ways your background matches the requirements outlined in the job ad or description.

Once you have identified a list of 3-4 matching skills, add a description of how you have developed or demonstrated the skills you mention above. For example, when writing about your organizational and communication skills, include settings in which you have used them: "I have proven my organizational skills by interning as an event planner and by working 20 hours per week while a full-time student." Or "Several of my leadership positions on campus have required me to demonstrate my strong communication skills including my role as student ambassador."

You focus on ways in which you can benefit the employer rather than stating what you would gain from the position.

Employers are not altruists. They have goals to accomplish and want their employees to be solutions to their problems. Therefore, don't say what's in it for you; focus on the ways you can be effective in this new role.

Your letter is well-written and free of typographical errors.

A single typo can be enough for your application to be shredded; read it aloud to catch typos and don't rely on spell check.

Your letter matches your resume in font style and size, if printed or PDF.

The two documents should look like companion pieces.

You address the ways you plan to follow-up after the letter is sent.

State what you will do next, or ways in which you are willing to assist them as they consider you. Tell them how you can be reached. Be sure your voice mail message sounds professional. See *Cover Letter Guide*, page 6 ("Paragraph 3") for more information.