



Speculative Applications

Speculative applications are used to apply for jobs which are not advertised. They usually comprise a well researched and targeted CV and a covering letter to a named contact. The layout of the covering letter differs slightly to one used to apply for an advertised vacancy.

➤ When to use them

- If you want to get into an area of work where opportunities are limited, or so popular, that employers can afford to rely on speculative applications alone to fill their vacancies rather than by advertising.
- If you are looking for vacation work or work experience opportunities which are not formally advertised.
- If you want to work in a specific geographical area or in a specialised area of work.
- If you are aiming at smaller organisations which do not recruit very often.

➤ Know what you can offer and use your networking skills

- Use your insight into the graduate level skills and attributes you can offer and your networking skills to help you to research and target your speculative application. Only when you've found out all you can and worked out how you can convince an employer that you're just what they need, are you ready to make your speculative application. For further information see our "Networking" handout.

➤ Work out what employers are looking for and match yourself to their likely criteria.

- Your speculative application **MUST** be employer specific. When you begin to write, if you are planning to target many employers, you will probably find it more efficient to first construct a general CV showing "everything" you could offer and modify this to fit so it becomes employer specific. Imagine yourself in the position of each employer you are targeting and consider how and why they can benefit from your input. This applies both to CVs and covering letters.

➤ Hints and tips when making a speculative application

- **Sell yourself.** Make sure your contact will take the time to read your letter. Be sure you can back up your claims.
- **Target your speculative application at the right person.** Speculative letters must be clearly aimed at an appropriate named target or your letter will be easy to ignore and could end up in the bin.
- **Newspaper ads often provide a name and address** even if they are not advertising your dream job. Phone up and ask for the name of the person who is responsible for recruitment in the section, role or area in which you are interested. Receptionists are usually happy to help.
- **To encourage a response** include a stamped, addressed envelope with your letter although you should be prepared to be proactive in following up your speculative applications.
- **Follow up** with a polite phone call and tell your target contact you intend to do this in your covering letter. Plan the call with care and approach it enthusiastically with the aim of getting further contacts if appropriate (keep networking!).
- **Leave your CV and covering letter with the right person** if you decide to call in person. If you phone your contact first, use these documents to help you talk about yourself and then forward them on to your contact.
- **If the employer doesn't have any vacancies,** ask to be kept on file and contact them again within 8 to 10 weeks. Some employers file speculative applications in the bin, but might keep exceptional ones if they expect a vacancy to arise.

- **Make sure you record** who you sent your application to, when you sent it and when you intend to follow up if you are sending out a lot of speculative applications.
- **Don't be discouraged if you don't have a positive response immediately.**

➡ Your covering letter

The usual formalities apply such as the date, your contact information, the name of your target etc. See Careers Service leaflet "Covering letters" for further information.

Paragraph one or two – why this employer? explaining clearly why you want to work for them.

Paragraph one or two – why this work? explaining your interest in this work, how it links with your career plans and whether you are looking mainly to gain work experience, if you need to be paid and if you are looking for a temporary or permanent position.

Paragraph three – the work itself explaining what work or alternatives you could do for them. A clear focus will help you to compose this part of your letter and help your target to understand what you are trying to achieve. Be aware that you need to balance focused offers with a willingness to be flexible.

Paragraph four – qualifications, knowledge, experience and skills providing evidence to support your application.

Paragraph five – follow up expressing interest in a meeting to talk about employment opportunities and indicating when you will phone to contact your target, perhaps in one or two weeks' time. This will encourage your target to consider your offer and prepare for your contact.

➡ Resources to help you write a speculative application

- Use your Careers Service for practical help with targeting your CV and covering letter. Bring them along to a drop-in session to be checked.

- Attend a workshop and/or take advantage of drop in sessions with a careers adviser for a fifteen minute session or book in advance for a longer appointment.
- Visit our website for access to a wealth of resources.
- Visit Prospects for some useful tips on speculative applications—
www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/applying-for-jobs/how-to-write-a-speculative-job-application
- Read and act on Aberystwyth Careers Service leaflets such as:
CVs
Covering Letters
All about Interviews
Networking
What do Employers Really Want?
Work Experience

Don't forget - you could be just what they need. Employers are busy people. Advertising and recruitment is expensive and time consuming. Your well researched and targeted speculative application could arrive at just the right time!

Location and Contact Details

- ➡ **Careers Service**
Students' Union (next to the Union Shop)
Open Monday - Thursday 9am - 5pm and Friday 9am - 4pm
Closed between 1pm - 2pm
Tel: 01970 622378
E-mail: careers@aber.ac.uk