

# Cover Letters for Academic Jobs

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English for Academic Purposes  
Workshop Series

# Graduate School Professional Development Activities Checklist

|  | Department and Discipline   | Research  | Teaching  | Career   | Ethics   |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Early Stage</b><br>(coursework; pre-doctoral)         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Learn about programs and resources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Synch to the professional development calendar</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop a strategic plan with your academic adviser</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Meet with your subject librarian</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explore resources for internal and external grants and fellowships</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for COS and register professional profile</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Apply for grants and fellowships</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explore Kaneb Center programs and resources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend TA Orientation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Begin working toward teaching certificates</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explore Career Center programs and resources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete a self-assessment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Build your campus network</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Build your CV</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend job talks in your department</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explore Office of Research, Riley Center, and Center for Ethics and Culture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete the required ethics workshop</li> </ul> |
| <b>Mid Stage</b><br>(master's research; candidacy exams) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Assess your strategic plan</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Meet departmental milestones</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop a network within your department</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pursue leadership and service options</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Join professional organizations and build your external network</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Participate in academic writing workshops</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend and present at conferences</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Apply for grants and fellowships</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer as a journal reviewer</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete a mentored teaching experience</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take a summer teaching course</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Arrange for teaching observation/consultation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start building portfolio</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Explore career opportunities for your field</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Identify your transferable skills</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Draft application materials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Seek internship opportunities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend job talks in your department</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reflect on the ethical dimensions related to your research</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend ethics and compliance lectures</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Late Stage</b><br>(dissertation; job search)          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Request references and identify job opportunities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mentor junior students</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Meet all deadlines</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Write and practice your job talk</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend a dissertation defense</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Report placement to Graduate School</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Form a dissertation reading/writing group</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Build international and interdisciplinary network</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Publish your research</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Devise a 5-year research plan</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Apply for dissertation fellowships</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Identify funding sources for continued research</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Apply for advanced teaching certificate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pursue "Instructor of Record" opportunities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finalize portfolio</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop teaching demonstration for academic interview</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finalize job application materials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tap into your professional network for job opportunities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Learn how to interview and negotiate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend job talks in your department</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Participate in an ethics class</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Serve as a role model for junior graduate students on negotiating ethical issues in your research</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend ethics and compliance lectures</li> </ul>    |



# Professional Development at Notre Dame

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- Check out the list of upcoming workshops on the Graduate School's website:

- [www.nd.edu](http://www.nd.edu)

# Introductions

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# By the end of this workshop...

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- You will know the basic form, structure, and tone of an academic cover letter
- You will know what to avoid in writing your cover letters
- You will have begun to draft your own cover letter



# Purpose

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- ❑ Connect your skills and experiences to the position for which you are applying.
- ❑ Tailor your cover letter for each job to which you apply.
- ❑ Show that you are familiar with the university (or company) and demonstrate that you are a good candidate for the position.



# Content

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- Position for which you are applying; where you found out about the position
- When you expect to have your PhD in hand
- Teaching: Experience and Philosophy
- Research: Experience and Future Plans
- Enclosures
- Tailor the content to the position; write a different cover letter for each institution!



# Organization

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- Emphasize (by location and space) what is most important for the position for which you are applying.
  - Teaching
  - Research
- Aim for 1½ to 2 pages .
- Print the letter on University letter head.
- Follow standard letter structure (next slide).





[Date]

[Head of Search Committee's Full Name]

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[Position]

[Department]

[University]

[Street Address]

[City, State Zip]

Dear [Title (Dr., Dean)] [Last Name]:

[First Paragraph]

[More Paragraphs]

[Final Paragraph]

Sincerely,

[Sign here or insert electronic version of your signature]

[Your Full Name]



# Tone

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- ❑ Academic, Professional, Confident, Human
- ❑ Be yourself! Express something of who you are as a scholar through how you talk about your teaching and research.
- ❑ Express your interest in the position by *showing* that your experiences and skills are uniquely suited to the position and the institution.

# Activity

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Review Cover Letter in  
“The Basics of Cover Letter Writing”  
from The Chronicle of Higher Education

<http://chronicle.com/article/The-Basics-of-Cover-Letter-46259/>



# Sample Cover Letter

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- ❑ What do you notice about the organization of the cover letter?
- ❑ What do you notice about the tone of the letter?
- ❑ How does the author make direct connections between her qualifications and the job for which she is applying?
- ❑ What are the strengths of this letter?
- ❑ What are the weaknesses of this letter?



# To Do and Not To Do

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- ❑ Do not sound like a graduate student; do present yourself as a colleague.
- ❑ Do not tell the search committee that you are a great person and a good fit; *show* them!
- ❑ Do not repeat the information on your CV; do develop the relevant parts as preparing your for the position.
- ❑ Do not send the same letter to multiple schools; do tailor the letter for each school.



# Other Information to Omit

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- Personal Details
  - Age, physical characteristics, marital status
  
- Irrelevant Experiences and Skills



# Sending the Cover Letter by Email

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- ❑ You will often be asked to submit application materials by email.
- ❑ Convert all documents to pdfs so the formatting will not change.
- ❑ The email is not a cover letter. Write a short, polite note indicating (1) the position for which you are applying and (2) that your application materials are all attached.

# Activity: Your Cover Letter

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# Writing the First Paragraph

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- ❑ The position to which you are applying and where you found out about it
- ❑ Your status (Candidate, have PhD) and the University
- ❑ Dissertation Title/Major Research Project



# Writing the Last Paragraph

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- List of requested enclosures
- Polite and confident “Please contact me” and “Thank you for your consideration”



# More Difficult: Internal Paragraphs

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- Write one paragraph about your teaching experience, showing how what you do in the classroom is unique and effective.

OR

- Write one paragraph summarizing the topic, thesis, and contribution of your dissertation.



# Resources

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- theprofessorisin.com
  - <http://theprofessorisin.com/2011/08/09/how-to-tailor-a-job-letter-without-flattering-pandering-or-begging/>
  - <http://theprofessorisin.com/2012/09/28/the-worst-job-letter-ever-written-not-really-but/>
- Your advisor and other professors in your department, especially those who have sat on search committees!



# One-on-one Tutoring

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- ❑ Make an appointment with an EAP fellow
- ❑ Tuesday 3:00-6:00
- ❑ Wednesday 2:00-5:00
- ❑ Thursday 9:00-12:00
- ❑ Friday 9:00-12:00



# EAP Classes for Fall 2013

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- Pronunciation Strategies and Techniques for English Language Learners (AL 73003)
- Classroom Strategies for International Teaching Assistants (AL 73004)
- Search under: Arts and Letters, Non-department
- Professor: Stew Markel