

BUSINESS AND LAW

WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

HANDBOOK - BOOK 2

WIL APPLICATIONS

CONTENTS

- STRUCTURE OF WIL PREPARATION PROGRAM
- GETTING STARTED
- JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES
- CONTACTING EMPLOYERS
- PREPARING RESUMES
- PREPARING COVER LETTERS

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WIL HANDBOOK - Book 2

APPLICATIONS

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APPLICATIONS

This Handbook (Book 2) is a supplement to the Work Integrated Learning Registration Kit (Book 1) and is primarily designed to assist students when sourcing Work Integrated Learning job opportunities. It includes information to prepare your job applications, résumés and cover letters and includes practical exercises to support the Work Integrated Learning Preparation Program workshops.

1. STRUCTURE OF THE WIL PREPARATION PROGRAM

The Preparation Program commences at the start of your second year at university and continues until you gain a position, generally at the beginning of the third year. Work preparation seminars, workshops and Expos are conducted to assist you in developing career readiness. WIL Coordinators may also provide individual assistance, tutoring and counselling to further develop your skills. During second year you are required to produce a résumé at the standard outlined by WIL Coordinator.

The work preparation seminars and workshops include the following topics:

- What is WIL?
- Winning Résumés
- Make Your Cover Letter Count and Outshine the Competition
- Interview Skills – Successful Interviews/How to Win that Interview

2. GETTING STARTED

In your efforts to obtain a valuable employment experience, it is critical that you have an awareness of what you have to offer a potential employer in terms of your skills and personal qualities and then be able to research and identify suitable employment opportunities related to them.

2.1 Know Yourself

In today's job market, it is a combination of your education, job related skills and personal qualities on which employers base their hiring decisions. You may be unaware of your own particular skills and abilities and how you have acquired them. Self-awareness and personal reflection will assist you to identify your skills and abilities, and enable you to understand how you may transfer them to your job search.

2.1.1 Skills Identification Audit

A Skills Audit can highlight the employable qualities and skills that you have developed. The Skills Audit on Page 22 will assist you to complete this exercise.

Exercise:



Begin by making a list of your:

- Educational background (VCE, degree, short courses).
- Working history (part-time at McDonalds, voluntary work).
- Community involvement (sporting clubs, volunteer, fundraising).
- Interests (sports, Internet, frequenting restaurants, reading business sections of newspapers, organising events).

2.1.2 Expanding Your List of Skills

Remember, it is important to know who you are if you are to promote yourself on paper to gain an interview. A sample list of Personal Skills can be found on Page 23, which may help you when thinking about your own skills and abilities. Keep your list handy, so you can refer to it and refine it as you discover the skills and attributes you have that are valued by employers in the business sector or profession you are targeting for your career.

2.2 Know Your Industry

Part of the job search process involves researching your chosen industry. Having an understanding of your industry helps you to identify your own career goals and assists you to effectively discuss job opportunities with employers. There are a number of strategies you can use to gain knowledge and understand the world of work.

2.2.1 Maintain Awareness of Your Profession

Read relevant e-newsletters, the daily papers, business magazines, and watch business affairs programs to keep abreast of what is happening in the business world. Review selected company websites general career and current employment information as well as the employment section of the daily newspapers (especially My Career in The Age on Saturdays). Job advertisements will provide you with reference material for the kind of positions offered in your field and the types of skills that are required. You may like to keep jobs of interest – even if they do require experience, they are still a good source of information about your industry.



2.2.2 Participate In Your Industry/Profession By:

- Joining a professional association and participate in activities they offer;
- Reviewing trade journals to find out the latest news about your industry (journals are available through the University Library);
- Following your industry through the newspapers or current affairs programs;
- Attending trade shows relevant to your industry.

2.3 What Do Employers Value?

The key to gaining employment lies in understanding what the employer is looking for. The following list outlines many of the skills and personal attributes that employers regularly identify as important in their recruitment decisions:

Skills

Technical (job related)
Leadership potential
Ability to multi-skill
Problem-solving
Communication
Computer
Teamwork

Attributes

Creativity
Adaptability/Flexibility
Realistic expectations
Confident, positive attitude
Motivation/ambition
Hard working/energetic
High work standards
Initiative
Assertiveness
Attention to detail



How does this list compare with some of your own skills and personal attributes?

Remember, no one possesses all of these skills or attributes. Your aim should be to be aware of your own skills and attributes, continually review your strengths and the areas you need to develop and be able to communicate effectively to potential employers what you have to offer through your résumé, interviews or networking.

2.3.1 Victoria University Graduate Capabilities

The Academic Board of Victoria University has identified a number of **Graduate Capabilities** as essential for all graduates;

- (1) Problem solve in a range of settings;
- (2) Locate, critically evaluate, manage and use written, numerical and electronic information;
- (3) Communicate in a variety of contexts and modes;
- (4) Work both autonomously and collaboratively;
- (5) Work in an environmentally, socially and culturally responsible manner; and
- (6) Manage learning and career development opportunities.

2.4 Information Resources

Student Career Development (refer www.vu.edu.au/careers)

Register with Student Career Development (SCD) to hear about events like the (Graduate) Careers Fair in March and employer visits to campus. You will gain information about jobs in your particular specialisation and will develop a greater understanding of what employers are looking for, whether it is for WIL or graduate positions. SCD also has a range of occupational information resources available. Casual/part-time work, volunteer positions, vacation programs and graduate opportunities are advertised through their WorkWizard Jobs Board.

Registration on WorkWizard is not the same as registration for Work Integrated Learning so you will need to register through both systems. Go to www.vu.edu.au/careers to register on WorkWizard.

Student Career Development is located in Building M, Level 4 at Footscray Park and appointments can be made with Careers Educators at Footscray Park, City Flinders, St Albans and Werribee by phoning 9919 4944 or by emailing careers@vu.edu.au.

Library



The VU library is a valuable resource. Use the business directories, business magazines, Internet, daily newspapers and online databases to locate information about various companies. Visit the library on your campus or check their website at <http://library.vu.edu.au/>.

Graduate Careers Australia

The "Graduate Opportunities" books published annually by Graduate Careers Australia is available online (www.graduateopportunities.com) or in hardcopy form at the beginning of the year from Student Career Development. The book includes information on professional associations, industry profiles, employer profiles and even some work integrated learning opportunities.

2.5 Helpful Hints

- Develop an awareness of your strengths and areas needing development – and work on them.
- Research what people do in the types of jobs you are considering.
- Take a flexible and long-term view – don't necessarily expect to get your perfect career job for WIL.
- Research organisations in your chosen industry (the internet, newspapers, magazines such as Business Review Weekly, employer information at the Student Career Development office, library databases).
- Think globally - be flexible regarding desired location of employment.
- Be realistic about your desired career.
- Undertake relevant part-time, casual or voluntary work.
- Understand the range of roles available to you and think about a logical career path.
- Conduct an information interview with someone in your field.
- Learn relevant computer packages and improve your keyboard skills.
- Advance your study of a second language or understanding of a different culture.
- Discuss with your WIL Coordinator any contacts you may have and wish to pursue, prior to talking to your contacts.

3. JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Be realistic!

It is important to have realistic expectations, and understand that you will probably not be able to immediately enter your ideal job. However, there are a number of stepping-stones that you can use to work toward your ideal job after graduation. For example, a marketing student may need to gain a start by working in a call centre position as the first stepping-stone toward their ultimate destination as a Marketing Manager.

3.1 The Advertised Job Market

3.1.1 Newspapers and Other Sources



Naturally hundreds of jobs are advertised in the papers weekly. This is a valuable resource for identifying not only specific positions but is also useful in giving you a feel for which companies are recruiting and possibly expanding. Start with reviewing the My Career section of The Age on a Saturday. Obviously, suitable **positions will not be advertised as “Co-op” or “BIL”**, as this is not widely used terminology. However, positions that incorporate any of the following words could be ideal: “Trainee, Assistant, Entry Level, Undergraduate, Internship”. In applying for such positions, you need to discuss your approach with your WIL Coordinator to ensure your application is tailored for the position

Positions are also advertised in local suburban papers and national newspapers such as The Australian. Additionally, jobs are advertised in industry association publications and while many may command experience, it is worth reviewing these regularly to identify potential employers.

As you source jobs through the printed media, you will come across an influx of recruitment agencies that recruit on behalf of their clients. Some familiar names include Hudson, Drake and Hays. Note that if you apply through an agency, you, the applicant, are not charged a fee, but you should view the agency as the “employer” who really needs to be satisfied with you, in order to recommend you for an interview with their client.

3.1.2 The Internet

There are an abundance of jobs that are advertised on the internet that are not necessarily advertised in the printed media. Therefore searching online is an essential part of your job search. Through this medium your approach to companies will typically be through email. Make sure that your email address is appropriate in a business context.



To maximise your opportunities using websites such as seek.com.au and mycareer.com.au and the university’s own Student Careers site, ensure that you take into account the following:

- Load your profile onto a site so you can receive emails alerting you to the types of positions you’re interested in.
- Respond promptly to advertisements as these sites receive a large response from online applicants. Be mindful of closing dates but try to get in early.
- Print off a hard copy of your application and ask a friend or relative to check it thoroughly for you before you submit it.
- Check for spelling and grammatical errors - it is easy to relax and not to provide the same level of attention for online applications as with formal cover letters.
- Many companies have career/employment information on their own corporate websites, so it pays to identify those companies you’re interested in and view their sites regularly.
- Review your emails regularly.

3.2 The Hidden Job Market

3.2.1 Networking

Did you know that approximately 80% of all positions are not advertised? This raises the question: “How do you find an unadvertised position?” There are a number of methods available to you, but the key to this approach is coming to terms with the prospect of “**networking**” - this will form part of your job search and be a useful skill to have throughout your career. Who do I network with?



3.2.2 Personal Contacts

Identifying your personal network is very important. The point is to get as many people as possible helping you in your job search. Below is a list, which you can use to identify specific individuals that could help you with your search.

- Parents
- Brothers/Sisters
- Uncles/Aunts
- Cousins
- Neighbours
- Friends
- Friends of friends
- Current Employers
- Former Employers
- Co-workers
- Members of:
 - Sports clubs/teams
 - Youth groups
 - Social clubs

Exercise:



Using the Networking List on page 25 of this handbook, list as many people in each of the above categories and record their contact numbers. Now consider how you will contact these people to inform them of your search for a position in your chosen field of study. Alternatively, you may know people that work in an organisation you would like to work for, but your contact is not a decision-maker or involved in recruitment. Contact them anyway, asking them for the contact details of the appropriate person to approach. Be sure to keep your WIL Coordinator informed every step of the way!

3.2.3 Professional Contacts

After considering your personal contacts, it's now time to branch into the unknown by contacting people from industry who may be valuable sources of information! One way of approaching people in industry is to become a student member of a professional association. Many professions are affiliated with an association, which offers students membership. This gets you a 'foot in the door' to special events such as Career Nights and Mentoring programs. To find your professional association talk to your WIL and/or Course Coordinator.



3.2.4 Community Contacts

Be mindful of the fact that anyone could be a potential employer. That includes local, small businesses that may prefer to hire someone who lives locally. It is best to explore **all** options.

Now that you have developed a list of both personal, professional and community contacts, the next step is to determine how to approach each one of your contacts. In some cases, where the person is well known to you, it may be appropriate to simply have a conversation in person or by phone letting them know that you are on the lookout for a job in a specific field. In other cases, particularly with your professional contacts, you might need to adopt a more formal approach. You will require a résumé and letter of introduction.

3.3 Voluntary Work

Voluntary work is about making yourself available to work for an organisation without payment. This can be undertaken in a wide range of areas in the public sector: health and welfare, community services, science and environment, sport, religion, education and recreation. It is a good way to update your skills, enhance your résumé, and help you gain an insight into working in a particular field and can lead to relevant employment.

Examples of community-based activities are as a visitor information adviser at a local or regional tourism Visitor Information Centre; an office bearer/Captain for a local sports club; a Marketing Assistant for the Red Cross.

Volunteering Victoria, www.volunteeringvictoria.com.au, Level 2, 491 King Street, West Melbourne, can assist you with contacts for voluntary work - Phone 8327 8510.

Bear in mind that voluntary work can count towards your WIL requirement. For example, relevant voluntary activities may be credited to a maximum of 25% of your total Co-operative Education subject requirement and may satisfy the full requirements of the subjects Business Integrated Learning or Professional Legal Practice.

It is also important to note that where your voluntary work experience is related to your studies the University has appropriate workplace insurance that may be required by your host organisation.

Contact your WIL Coordinator for further assistance and advice for voluntary work.

3.4 Information Interviewing

Another valuable source of information about what's happening in an occupation or an industry is to talk to people working in the field. This process is called Information Interviewing. It doesn't have to be a formal process and could be as simple as chatting to someone at a barbeque or to a friend's parent!

Steps to follow:

- Identify the occupation or industry you wish to learn about.
- Investigate if any of your contacts know anyone in this field.
- Arrange to talk in person, over the phone or by email.

Sample questions:

- What personal qualities or abilities are important to being successful in this job?
- What part of this job do you find most satisfying? ... Most challenging?
- What are the basic prerequisites for jobs in this field?
- Which professional journals and organisations would help me learn more about this field?
- How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
- What special advice would you give a person entering this field?
- On a typical day in this position, what do you do?

Make the best use of your network by giving people an easy way to help you. Rather than saying: "I am looking for a job. Do you know of any jobs?" ask for advice, suggestions and leads to follow up if they know of a job that may be appropriate. Prepare a brief statement about what you're looking for and how they can help you:

"Hello, my name is I am a student at Victoria University studying (course) I'm looking for an entry-level job in Accounting. Do you know anyone who is working as a Finance Manager or Chief Accountant whom I might chat briefly with about their position? Do you know anyone who works for X company or Y company? Would you mind providing their contact details and would it be ok if I mention your name when I contact them?"



CONTACTING THE EMPLOYER

4.1 Warm Calling and Cold Calling

At some stage of the job seeking or application process, you may need to telephone the employer. This can either make or break your application or give you valuable leads or advice. There are generally two types of calls that you may make – a cold call or a warm call. **Cold Calling** is telephoning an employer when you have not had any previous contact with them or their company. **Warm-Calling** is telephoning an employer when you have not met or spoken to them before but a contact has referred you. In either situation, you may or may not have sent them an introductory letter before making your phone call. The key to both cold and warm calling is to be prepared for anything. You must always be ready to sell yourself and your skills. In order to gain some confidence, you may like to practise with your personal network first.



Exercise:



You need to prepare a dialogue (your personal 'spiel') in which you make a verbal introduction to the employer. Rehearse your approach and try this out on a friend or family member.

There are five points to remember:

1. Introduce yourself!
2. Tell them why you are contacting them, e.g. "I'm following up on a letter I sent to you a fortnight ago."
3. Confirm that it is a convenient time to call. If it's not, find out a time that would be convenient and call back promptly at that time. Don't leave it up to them to call you – they may never ring back!
4. If the company cannot offer you advice or employment and do not want to meet with you, ask them if they have any contact details of people you could approach.
5. Thank them for their time, and make sure you leave the door open for another approach (as a graduate!)

4.2 Helpful Hints When Calling Employers



Sometimes people get too relaxed (even sloppy) when using the telephone. It's important to project confidence in your voice and to speak directly into the phone. After all, the voice at the other end of the line may belong to your first professional employer.

Here are some ideas to keep in mind:

- Talk to the right person at the right time. Try to talk to the person who is responsible for recruiting in your discipline. The timing of your call needs to be considered.
(TIP: Try to avoid calling first thing on a Monday or last thing on a Friday).
- If you can't reach that person, find out when is the best time to call back later and indicate that you will.
- It is advisable to leave a message only once or twice. Be sure to state what your call is in reference to.
- Avoid using a mobile phone to ensure clear reception or call from a private quiet room.
- Sound confident and professional; speak clearly and use appropriate language and enunciation.
- Smile! ... a smile can be heard over the phone.
- Get to the point: Say only what needs to be said.
- Listen to the other person. Take notes on what is said.
- Ask for a meeting at a time that suits the employer. "Would Thursday afternoon or Friday morning be more suitable for you, Mrs. Taylor?"
- Keep a record of your call - record your contact's name, what they said and/or suggested, and what actions you agree to e.g.: sending in your résumé.

5. PREPARING APPLICATIONS

Your application is a critical marketing tool in your job search. In this section we will look at preparing your résumé, drawing on your skills and abilities identified in the previous section and developing cover letters for both advertised and non-advertised positions. The emphasis will be on how best to present what you have to offer to potential employers.

Applications to positions usually consist of:-

- Cover letter or online application (usually required or as requested)
- Résumé (essential)
- Academic Transcript (optional or as requested)
- Response to Selection Criteria (only if requested and usually required for government jobs)

5.1 Résumés



Your résumé, or Curriculum Vitae (CV), is a document that is designed to promote you as a candidate for a particular job ~ in effect to sell you! It is your personal advertisement and an ideal opportunity for you to 'market yourself'. The résumé should include your personal details, concisely record your education, summarise your employment history and demonstrate your relevant skills, experience and attributes. Its primary purpose is to secure an employment interview. It must look good and highlight the things that matter to an employer.

The information below is a guide for you to consider when writing your résumé. Carefully read through the next few pages to gain a better understanding of what employers are seeking.

There is no set formula that a résumé should follow. You may choose from many different styles and formats. Often résumés differ according to industry areas and your personal history. The following information should help you to compile your most valuable marketing tool – an effective résumé!

The Ideal Résumé

- Is individual in design to create curiosity and interest from a prospective employer.
- Is convincing and easy to read.
- Reveals all the information that makes you unique and desirable to an employer.
- Demonstrates clarity of expression.
- Is unique and shows creativity when appropriate.
- Highlights the skills that employers are looking for.
- Is usually not more than 3 pages in length.

Language in Résumés

- Avoid lengthy sentences and the use of "I".
- It is preferable to use phrases and "dot points".
- Do not abbreviate or use acronyms.
- Use action verbs in résumés to highlight areas of skill and achievement.

For a comprehensive list of action verbs, refer to list on Page 24.

Layout of a Résumé

This handbook suggests information to be included in a résumé as a general guide when designing your own. You may also want to browse Australian internet sites for ideas on résumé layout.

How creative you are will depend very much on your target industry. If you are not sure how to personalise your résumé in a creative yet appropriately professional manner, please check first with your WIL Coordinator.

5.1.2 Work Integrated Learning Résumé Suggestions

Below are recommended headings for your résumé

PERSONAL DETAILS:

- Name - Highlight or bold your first and last name.
Address - Include the address where you are currently living.
Telephone - Make sure your number has a voicemail/answering service with an appropriate message.
Email Address - You must use your student email address. A second personal email account is optional.

Example

Karina Nguyen

28 Station Street

Footscray Vic 3011

Tel: 9416 8785

Mobile: 0411 656 656

Email: Karina.Nguyen@live.vu.edu.au

CAREER OBJECTIVE: (Optional) If in doubt, LEAVE IT OUT!

Your career objective should give the reader an understanding of your career aspirations.

Example

To obtain an entry-level position in International Trade for a globally-based shipping company, that will offer challenges and future opportunities for career progression.

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:

Your academic history should be in reverse chronological order (most recent first) and should include your Tertiary and Secondary education.

Example

2010 to present

Bachelor of Business (Hospitality Management)

Victoria University

Achievements

Distinction average results

Received an award for the highest grade in Business Statistics

2009

Victorian Certificate of Education

MacKillop College

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS/PROJECTS: (Optional)

You may decide to include relevant project/s to demonstrate how you have applied your skills and knowledge to a particular issue or problem.

Example

University Project, with group of 6, responsible for organising and co-coordinating a live performance event.

Duties involved:

- sourcing sponsorship opportunities to fund the event;
- ensuring advertising campaigns reached the target audience;
- choosing the venue and entertainment;
- co-ordinating ticketing, promotion & graphic design;
- budgeting, risk management and security plans;

Outcome: event attracted record numbers; achieved Distinction grade.

SKILLS / CAPABILITIES

In this section of your résumé, you need to describe your job-related, transferable skills and provide an example demonstrating each. You should not merely provide a list of skills. Therefore, choose your top 4-5 key strengths or skills and provide a supporting statement for each. These skills should be relevant to the industry that you are seeking to enter and may have been gained from your university studies or from work or community experiences. Other skills of interest to employers may have been developed in previous jobs, voluntary work or in sport or other interests.

Example

Project Management

Demonstrated in many group assignments the ability to delegate tasks and receive updates from group members to ensure and track project completion.

Creativity

Ability to be artistic and think “outside of the box”. Provided packaging design ideas for ABC Technologies and showed promise in Visual Communication and Design at secondary school.

Analytical

Capable of thinking laterally to solve a problem and select the best option to get the most effective results. This has been demonstrated in all employment positions as well as in groups at university.

Leadership

Evidenced by promotion to Crew Chief at McDonald’s

Organisational

Prioritised assignments and other commitments, ensuring sufficient time for each obligation to be completed with 100% percent accuracy.

Interpersonal

Proven ability to form relationships with clients and work cohesively within a team. In all employment positions, demonstrated ability to listen and understand concerns of both clients and co-workers.

Research

Undertaken research for numerous university assignments using the internet, texts, journals and face-to-face interviewing. In a professional setting, assisted with market research whilst working at ABC Technologies.

Computer

Excellent skills in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Illustrator, PhotoShop, Internet and email.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES (Optional)

Attributes are different to skills. A skill describes how you approach and accomplish a particular task in a given situation. An attribute is a personal quality or characteristic you possess.

Examples of attributes are:

- responsible, dedicated, fast learner, punctual.

When mentioning attributes, you also need to demonstrate how you are “responsible” or “punctual” with a supporting statement, as per the Skills section above.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

The following information needs to be provided when listing current or previous employment. This section should also be in reverse chronological order (current and most recent positions first.)

Example

January 2009-Current

Coles Supermarket

Sales Assistant (part-time)

Duties/responsibilities

- Cash register operation
- Renewing and rotating shelf stock
- General store cleaning

Achievements:

- Employee of the Month for September 2009 and March 2010

VOLUNTARY WORK

Voluntary Work can be included in your résumé under its own heading or can be incorporated under Employment History. If you prefer the latter, be sure to mention that the work was unpaid. Voluntary Work should be set out as per the example under Employment History.

ACHIEVEMENTS

You may wish to include any achievements that you believe add value to your résumé.

MEMBERSHIPS (OPTIONAL)

You should consider joining the professional body relevant to your industry. Speak your WIL Coordinator if you are unsure of your relevant industry associations.

INTERESTS / EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

This information gives an employer an idea of what you are like as a person, e.g. playing competitive tennis, snow skiing, surfing the net, travelling in Asia. This information may help you and the employer build rapport at interview. For example, if you are studying Tourism Management, you may show "travel" as a particular interest and could include a summary list of destinations and/or regions you have visited.

REFEREES

Make sure to include at least 2, preferably 3 referees' **current** details including name, title, organisation and phone numbers.

Example

Judith Rush

Manager, Staffing

Safeway Supermarket

Ph: 03 9919 4889

Mobile: 0416 466 478

E: judith.rush@safeway.com.au

REFERENCES (OPTIONAL)

References are **written** testimonials about your employment performance from a past employer. They should be attached to your application or scanned and submitted electronically. To be credible they will need to be typed on company letterhead, signed and dated. Just remember that employers typically do not want to read lengthy documents or applications.

ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPTS

If required, attach your latest updated academic transcript to the résumé, which can be accessed as a PDF from MyVU.

5.2 Cover Letters

Once you have identified a specific position you wish to apply for, it is time to prepare a cover letter, attach your résumé and forward these essential elements of your application.



5.2.1 Cover Letters for Advertised Positions (The Reactive Case)

A cover letter for an advertised position is a response (reaction) to a particular communication from an organisation seeking qualified candidates for a specific employment opportunity. This is the best way of highlighting how your abilities and achievements will be of direct benefit to the employer. Successful cover letters (measured by whether you gain an interview) are those which are **carefully tailored to each position** which is advertised ~ and are **not based on a set template** or past example.

The most important requirement is that your cover letter must provide evidence that you can **meet the requirements or selection criteria** outlined in the position description or job advertisement.

The aim of a cover letter is to answer the fundamental question – “Why should the company consider you for an interview?” Your cover letter must provide the employer with enough evidence to interest them to go on to thoroughly read and review your résumé. The role of the cover letter is to introduce *you and your* résumé.

MAKE YOUR LETTER INDIVIDUAL – DO NOT COPY EXAMPLES FROM BOOKS OR FROM OTHER STUDENTS!!

5.2.2 Cover Letters for Non-Advertised Positions (The Proactive Case)

If you are applying in writing to a prospective employer where a specific job has not been advertised, and you are proactively seeking relevant employment opportunities, your résumé needs to be accompanied by a letter of introduction. This letter is different to a standard “cover letter” as you will need to make some educated and informed calculations on what skills and capabilities the employer requires; that is, what selection criteria they may consider while evaluating whether to invite you in for an interview.

When preparing a letter of this nature, consider the following factors:

- Indicate how you identified the person you are writing to and why you are writing to them:

Example

“Ms Jones, Marketing Manager at XYZ, suggested I write to you ...”

“As a result of attending a *careers fair at Victoria University*, I am writing to express my interest.....”

“I am writing to you in the hope that your company may be able to offer me full-time or relevant career employment in 2012”;

“I am writing to you to introduce myself and tell you about the Work Integrated Learning program at Victoria University.

As part of the Bachelor of Business degree I am studying, I have decided to seek 12 months relevant experience in industry next year ...”

- Sell yourself! Highlight your skills and the contribution you feel you can make to the company.
- Be sure to include your contact details and to finish off on a positive note:

Example

“Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I can be contacted on ph: 0400 123 456 to answer any questions you might have ...”

In preparing to write to a company, it may be necessary for you to telephone the company to identify the appropriate person to address. You will need to identify their title and correct mailing address. (Refer to “Contacting the Employer” on Page 10 of this handbook for more information).

5.2.3 A Plan for a Cover Letter for an Advertised Position

Applicants address (may be right or left justified)

Date

Employer's Details (Must include ...)

Name
Position Title
Organisation
Address

Dear Ms Johnson:

Always address the letter personally and formally using the above format. Not as "Dear Ms Linda Johnson"~ use last names only. If you don't have a contact name, use "Dear Sir/Madam," not "To Whom It May Concern".
Make sure that names are spelt correctly!

Opening Paragraph:

The **reason for the letter** and how you became aware of the position. Make it interesting to read and show enthusiasm for the position. For example:-

"I wish to apply for the position of.....as advertised in..... on(date).... because....."

"Your advertisement for a Marketing Assistant through the University's Centre for Work Integrated Learning immediately grabbed my attention as ..."

"I read with interest your advertisement for a Customer Service Representative, which was advertised in "My Career" on ... "

Middle Paragraphs:

The middle paragraphs (from 3 to 5) are critical to a successful application. This is where you demonstrate your suitability for the position. Explain how your **studies, education and skills will be of value** to the company by putting forward your 2-3 best skills/experience/knowledge, which relate closely to the job requirements. You must show how you have **demonstrated** these skills in your previous jobs, at University, within the community or by undertaking recreational or sporting activities and **not** merely state that you possess the required skills. The employer's primary interest is seeing that you have the skills/abilities that they are seeking. For example:-

"I believe I have developed strong communication skills through my extensive experience over four years in various customer service roles at Coles."

"Through my role as Section Supervisor at La Porchetta, I was able to enhance my leadership skills by training staff, delegating tasks and by setting a positive example for others."

Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer, show that you have done some research. For example:-

"As the winner of the Luxury Accommodation Award for 2009, Crown Towers has established itself as one of Melbourne's most prestigious hotels. I would like to ultimately be a part of their future successes."

Closing Paragraph:

Finish positively, expressing your enthusiasm to be considered for an interview and make sure that your contact details are provided. Make reference to any requested attachments such as a résumé and academic transcripts.

Yours sincerely,

If possible, sign your cover letters personally.
Type your name underneath your signature.

Encl: Résumé
Academic Results (if required/included)

5.2.4 A Plan for a Non-Advertised Position (Letter of Introduction)

Applicants address (may be right or left justified)

Date

Employer's Details

Name

Position Title

Organisation

Address

Dear Mr. Williams,

Always address the letter personally and formally "Dear Mr. or Ms. Williams". You may need to contact the organisation to identify who is the most appropriate person to address your letter. Make sure that names are spelt correctly!

Opening Paragraph:

The reason for the letter, To seek assistance with job opportunities? Information about the field? To arrange to meet with them? Explain how you became aware of their details. Make it interesting to read and show enthusiasm. For example:-

"I am very interested in entering the accounting profession and would appreciate any guidance or assistance you could offer."

"As a result of discussion with your colleague, Ms Brown, I am writing to discuss the possibility . . ."

Middle Paragraphs:

The middle paragraphs need to demonstrate how your skills will be of value to the company. Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer and their activities; show that you have done some research. For example:-

"I am extremely keen to work for ANL in their customer service division as they are one of Australia's most successful organisations with a leading reputation world-wide for offering high levels of service in the import/export sectors and provide employees ample opportunity for career advancement."

Closing Paragraph:

Include your contact details and thank the reader for their time and express your appreciation of their assistance. Finish positively, expressing your willingness to be contacted.

Make reference to any attachments such as a résumé and transcripts.

Yours sincerely,

If possible, sign your cover letters personally.

Type your name underneath your signature.

Encl: Résumé
 Academic Results (if required/included)

5.2.5 Helpful Hints

- Make sure the date, your full address with postcode and your email address have been included.
- Employer/Addressee information must include Name, Title, Organisation, Address.

- Use spell-check, double check and ask someone else to check your letter for spelling and typing mistakes. It is often difficult to see your own typing mistakes, but the employer reading the letter will certainly notice them.
- Ideally the cover letter should be no longer than one page. The idea is to concisely capture the attention and interest of the reader so that you will be invited to an interview, not to provide your life story.
- Do not attempt to prepare one letter for several applications. Each letter **MUST** be directed towards a specific position, covering the skills or selection criteria in that particular advertisement.
- Mention your 2-3 best skills, which relate most closely to those required by the employer.
- Do not ignore any requested skills or selection criteria. Be prepared to write something about your understanding of the relevance of the skills/criteria even if you can't provide demonstrated examples.
- Always use 'action' words to add realism and intensity e.g. managed, supervised, produced, developed, demonstrated.
- Try to vary your language – do not start every paragraph with "I".
- Use the language relating to the industry. Improve your knowledge of the industry by reading relevant journals.

5.3 Selection Criteria

Most job advertisements will give the reader an idea of what particular work-related skills and/or personal characteristics they are seeking. These may be identified in a section titled "Selection Criteria", "Desired Attributes" or "Personal Characteristics". To successfully gain an interview, you should discuss these requirements clearly and effectively within your cover letter. When applications are screened and interviews conducted, applications are measured against these selection criteria.



These requirements may be stated in the following way:

"The successful candidate will have well developed organisational, communication and interpersonal skills, and be able to balance the need for guidance where appropriate, but also show initiative and creativity. You will need to have a problem-solving attitude, good research skills and the ability to undertake a project from inception to completion within time constraints".



However, in some cases, particularly public sector/government jobs, the selection criteria are more formal and you may have to systematically respond to the listed selection criteria in a separate document. This document is required **in addition** to the résumé and cover letter and requires examples of your knowledge and experience even if similar to information already contained within your résumé. Most students employed as staff at Victoria University as part of the "Students as Staff" Program do need to complete this separate document as part of their application.

You must use your own personal experience and **always provide specific personal examples** in addressing selection criteria in job applications. The following examples are designed to demonstrate how you could write about particular selection criteria. The selection criteria are shown in bold with an example of the candidate's response beneath.

- **Relevant educational qualifications and/or experience**

I am currently completing a Bachelor of Business (xxxxxxx) at Victoria University and have a Credit average result. I also completed a Certificate 3 in Information Technology.

- **Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing with a wide range of people.**
 During my University studies, I have demonstrated excellent communication skills, by maintaining a high standard in written reports, essays and oral presentations. My work as a Customer Service Assistant at Target has strengthened my ability to work with customers from varied ages and backgrounds, always maintaining positive relationships and attempting to resolve difficult situations. In addition, I speak, read and write Turkish fluently.
- **Demonstrated ability to prioritise duties and to meet deadlines.**
 In all of my part-time positions, I have shown myself to be very organised and have always met deadlines for fulfilling customer orders. I always prioritise my workload at university to ensure that assignments are submitted on time.
- **Well developed interpersonal skills, able to work in a team environment.**
 I consider myself to be a friendly, flexible person who is able to work well in teams, both in University and workplace situations. Working in a fast paced environment such as KFC, I have learned the importance of teamwork for meeting customer expectations and have also developed my skills in this area through effective participation in group projects at University.
- **Initiative, judgment and decision-making skills.**
 Working as a pharmacy assistant for three years, I have often been left in sole charge of the store when my manager has been away. In this situation, I have needed to use my initiative and judgment to solve situations that have arisen with customer expectations, delivery problems and security issues.
- **Be results oriented and have the ability to reach work targets under pressure.**
 My work experience at Primus Telecom has been invaluable to me as I have learned to work under pressure in a call centre environment, whilst meeting my sales targets and maintaining excellent customer service.
- **Flexibility and a willingness to adapt to change.**
 As a part-time employee of McDonalds, I have shown my willingness to be flexible by making myself available for different shifts when my fellow workers have been absent. During my employment at McDonalds, many new procedures have been implemented and I have always been able to learn these quickly in order to ensure that customer service remains a top priority.

NOTE: These statements may constitute a separate document, attached to your application, titled “Response to the Selection Criteria” or may be integrated into the body of your application letter ~ check with your WIL Coordinator if you are unsure which model is required for each job you are applying for.

5.4 Application Forms

Some employers request that application forms be submitted when applying for available positions. In particular, application forms are a necessary part of the recruitment process with major accounting firms and some of the large organisations such as ANL and Sofitel Melbourne. Many of these companies now require that you complete application forms online.

Application forms generally ask for the same type of information as in your résumé but in a standard format which makes it easier for the employer to consider a large number of applications together. It is critical that you complete these forms and answer every question that has been asked, even though you may have covered it in your résumé. Often employers will not look at your résumé unless you have completed your application form satisfactorily. Your answers on an application form are treated very seriously and often form a vital part of your first assessment for a position.

It is also important to recognise that scanning software is often used to screen on-line applications and look for key words so your responses must be professional, on-target and include appropriate terms for each position.



TIPS:

- 1 It always a good idea to have spare copies of application forms – just in case you make a mistake!!
- 2 Check if you can save the online application and come back to it before you start.
- 3 Keep a “bank” of written responses on a word document to use as a base for future applications.

Students should read any job advertisements and position descriptions carefully to ensure that they complete and submit all forms required for an application. Check with your WIL Coordinator if there is any uncertainty.

Submitting Online Applications Direct to Large Companies

The following information will be useful to you when you apply for positions with large organisations (including global corporations, such as KPMG and General Motors Holden etc).

Before you start:

- **Email address**
Your email address is the primary method of contact with online applications. Ensure that this is correct, current, reliable, accessible and appropriately named. Enter two if possible (e.g. Uni account and a personal professionally worded account).
- **Research the company**
Most companies using online applications will include all the information that you need to know about the company on their website - ensure you check it out thoroughly prior to applying.
- **Find out the closing time and date**
Don't miss out because you missed the closing date. It is best **NOT** to start the application on or towards the last day as the site will inevitably be slower due to increased traffic (as other people frantically try to complete their applications as well!). The application may also be longer and more detailed than expected, requiring more time and research. Also, if you do encounter any technical difficulties, you may not be able to complete your application by the deadline.
- **Read instructions thoroughly**
Ascertain the requirements of the application - does it have to be completed in one sitting or can it be partially completed and saved? Are you required to establish a User Name and Password for the site? (If so, be sure to note them down carefully and so that they are retrievable in the future.) Well-designed applications will allow you to complete the application over time in separate sittings. Does it require the completion of extended answers or require prior research and planning?
- **Complete any suggested online practice questions**
Sometimes sample questions and answers are displayed beforehand.

During the application:

- **Read all the text and instructions**

Text and instructions are used sparingly throughout the online application process and exist to assist you in completing the application successfully - so read them carefully!

- **Treat it like a formal document**

Just because the application is online does not mean it can be written like an email to a friend. Use sentences, not bullet points and ensure that your grammar and spelling are correct, and that you have used the correct punctuation where appropriate.

- **Concentrate on your content**

The time you save in formatting an individually styled application and résumé can be used to improve the quality of its content.

- **Don't give up**

If you have computer problems or the website is not functioning correctly or you don't understand the process, contact the company directly either by email or phone. (Use the phone if the closing date is less than 48 hours away!)

When you have finished:

- **Print a hard copy.**

Always make a copy of your application - either in hard copy or as a Word file as you will usually not be able to access it online after the closing date.

5.5 Reviewing Your Progress

Learn from each application

Think about what you would do differently

Did you get an interview? If not, ask your WIL Coordinator for feedback from the employer or assistance on how to improve your written application to maximize your strengths.

Remember, student success in Work Integrated Learning is increased when students:

- Receive good results for all subject studies;
- Engage in some part-time, community or voluntary work experience;
- Investigate prospective career paths in their respective field;
- Utilise classroom assessment tasks and projects to investigate businesses in their chosen field;
- Maintain regular contact with their respective WIL Coordinator;
- Have an excellent résumé and cover letter to apply for positions.

Lastly, be persistent – keep trying and you WILL be successful!

6. EXERCISES AND GUIDES

Skills Audit

Education

Courses Studied	Skills and Knowledge Learned
<i>E.g. Bachelor of Business (Marketing)</i>	<i>Planning marketing campaigns, understanding the 4 P's, consumer behaviour, the business cycle</i>

Employment History

Previous Jobs	Tasks
<i>E.g. Clerical Assistant</i>	<i>(Filing, Photocopying documents, phone inquiries, reception, preparing reports.</i>

Community Involvement

<i>E.g. Raised funds for local netball club by organising a fun run. Youth group leader</i>

Strengths/Major Achievements in My Life

Interests and Memberships

<i>Skills I have developed through my interests such as organising social events and trips, car maintenance, investing in shares, sporting clubs.</i>	

Describe Yourself

<i>Personal Attributes e.g. Punctual, reliable, trustworthy.</i>	

Personal Skills

This list may help you identify some of your personal skills that you can use as examples in your applications.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Administering programs | Serving individuals |
| Analysing data | Setting up demonstrations |
| Advising people | Speaking in public |
| Arranging social functions | Interviewing people |
| Auditing financial reports | Inventing new ideas |
| Budgeting expenses | Listening to others |
| Calculating numerical data | Managing a team |
| Checking for accuracy | Mediating between people |
| Classifying records | Meeting the public |
| Coaching individuals | Monitoring progress of others |
| Collecting money | Motivating others |
| Compiling statistics | Negotiating contracts |
| Coordinating events | Operating equipment |
| Corresponding with others | Organising people and tasks |
| Counselling people | Persuading others |
| Creating new ideas | Planning agendas |
| Deciding uses of money | Planning organisational needs |
| Delegating responsibility | Preparing a presentation |
| Designing data systems | Preparing materials |
| Dispensing information | Problem solving |
| Displaying artistic ideas | Programming computers |
| Distributing products | Promoting events |
| Editing publications | Raising funds |
| Enduring long hours | Reading volumes of material |
| Entertaining people | Reviewing programs |
| Evaluating programs | Running meetings |
| Exhibiting plans | Selling products |
| Finding information | Supervising others |
| Handling complaints | Teaching classes |
| Handling detailed work | |

Action Words for Jobs

A list of words you could use in your application and résumé follows:

achieved	edited	know	researched
acted	encourage		revised
adjusted	enlarge	lead	reviewed
administered	employed	learned	
applied	ensured	listened	saved
arranged	established		selected
assembled	estimated	maintained	serviced
authorised	evaluated	managed	set up
	examined	mechanised	shaped
believe	expanded	memorised	simplified
brought		merged	sold
budgeted	figure out		solved
built	finalised	observed	sorted
	followed up	obtained	strengthened
calculated	formed	operated	succeeded
carried out		organised	summarised
classified	gained	oversaw	supervised
coached	gathered		
collected	guarded	performed	taught
compared	guided	persuaded	tended
compiled		planned	tested
completed	headed	prepared	transferred
composed	held	presented	transformed
conducted	helped	prevented	translated
constructed	hired	produced	typed
consulted		problem-solving	
controlled	improved	promoted	uncovered
coordinated	increased	proposed	unraveled
counseled	indexed	proved	used
created	informed		utilised
collected	inspected	questioned	
	installed		viewed
dealt with	instructed	recognised	
deceived	interviewed	recruited	worked on
delivered	introduced	reduced	worked with
demonstrated	invented	released	wrote
designed	involved	renovated	
developed		reorganised	
did	judged	repaired	
		reported	

Note: These words can make an impact in your application and résumé by giving a positive message, but only if they fit what you are trying to say.

