Universität
Konstanz

Advice provided by the Career Service

Career consultation for international students during lecture period
Drop-in consultation/CV check/LinkedIn check (20 minutes)

Tuesday, 15:30–17:00 in D 412a

Extensive consultation (60 minutes)

By individual arrangement.

Find information on the arrangement of appointments here:
– uni.kn/cs/consultation

Kontakt

Raum D 412a/D 413/D 414
career.service@uni-konstanz.de

– uni.kn/career-service

Cover Letter and CV

BEWERBUNG

Tips for professional application documents

Cover letter – an overview

Form

General requirements:
– Choose an easy-to-read font size (no smaller than 10) and a common font so that it is machine-readable.
– Avoid spelling and grammatical errors.
– Make sure your wording is clear, precise, active and positive.
– Present your personality authentically.
– Create links between the tasks and requirements in the job advertisement and your experience and skills.
– Draft each letter anew and individually.
– Make sure you check for spelling mistakes and that the employer's name and details are correct before sending.

Letterhead:
– Your own name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (as a block aligned to the left or right or in the header)
– Name and address of the company (also if uploaded to applicant databases or sent as a PDF attachment by e-mail)
– Place and current date
– Subject line ("Application as …")
– Address a specific person in the salutation (if possible)

Content

Although the cover letter for an employer is often still called "cover letter", it usually refers to a letter of motivation. There may be special requirements for academic applications, scholarships, Master's programmes, etc. (often stated in the call of application). The letter serves to demonstrate your motivation and skills and offers the opportunity to make the decision-makers curious and captivate their attention. It is your opportunity to create a very personal and individual impression and to stand out from the mass of applications. To do this successfully, it is important to analyse your own skills and knowledge in advance. Formulate key statements relating to your qualifications and the position you are applying for.

In your cover letter, you can use relevant aspects from your CV to explain why you are well suited to the position and link these to the employer's requirements. Back up your information with your experience.
Please note that many recruiters will read your CV first. Therefore, do not repeat what is already on your CV.

The following points are important:
– Why am I the right person?
– What is the benefit of hiring me?
– How can I make the other person want to get to know me?

The cover letter – examples, no-go's and details

An innovative start
Avoid empty phrases because they do not bring any benefit or added value, but are rather boring.

So what else?
The introduction is particularly easy if there is a personal point of contact (from life, experiences or interests or a (telephone) conversation, conversation at the career fair …).

Otherwise, the best and strongest argument is ideal for the first sentence.

– You can comprehensively analyse your own motivation for applying and get to the heart of the matter,
– and/or research and name current challenges and recommend yourself as a problem solver,
– and/or provide a story, describe a key experience or a milestone in your professional career that can be used to convincingly explain your motivation for applying.

A compelling main section
– **Think about the employer's perspective in your cover letter.**
   Helpful question: "Why should we hire you in particular"? – The employer wants
   someone who can solve certain problems and ultimately someone who can do
   more than they cost.
– **Go into detail about the content of the job and your relevant qualifications
   and experience.**
   Limit yourself to the essential and relevant qualifications listed in the job advert.
   Detailed explanations of your academic career are only appropriate for relevant
   job advertisements (e.g. in research and teaching). There are now jobs adver-
   tised for academics (especially in the humanities and social sciences) for which
   the subject, degree and final grade achieved are not of central importance. The
   decisive factor is often that you have studied and acquired certain competen-
   ces. What is relevant for the assessment are your specific professional experi-
   ence, motivation and personality, which should arouse curiosity.
– **Stay free of empty phrases and instead convince with confident language,
   strong arguments and motivation.**
   Be explicit about how you can utilise your existing experience and knowledge in
   the position you are applying for.
– **Go beyond your professional skills and qualifications.**
   What individual qualities can I demonstrate and prove? You should clearly exp-
   lain your experience with teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills
   and other soft skills using specific examples.

A clear ending:
Give a clear ending and be careful not to be too pleading. If relevant, use the
space to clarify the general conditions (starting date, salary, if requested, etc.)

The CV – an overview

The aim of the CV is to give the potential employer an overview of your educatio-
nal and professional background.
The CV helps your employer to recognise whether you are qualified for the posi-
tion. Adapt the content of your CV to the desired job as far as possible.
The CV is usually laid out in tabular form and in chronological order and lists the
relevant dates and facts in keywords. Clarity is the decisive criterion when compi-
ling the information in the CV: The central and relevant stages should be recogni-
sable at a glance.
The most important thing about your CV is the content! Only then comes the lay-
out.
Your CV content determines your CV design – and not the other way round.
A design that is as "creative" as possible tends to distract from the essentials
and makes it more difficult to absorb the information.

The form

→ The CV should be one to a maximum of three pages long. With three pages,
   however, you should also have a lot to show.
→ Use a uniform font and size (at least 10).
→ Use standardised dates (months and year for all points listed in a standardised
   format, e.g. 11/2018–4/2019).

The structure

→ Write the CV in **antichronological order** (always start with the most recent point within the sections).

→ Work with **sections** and use meaningful titles.

→ Indicate the experience relevant to this position and refrain from irrelevant lists in relation to the application in question.

→ Explain larger **"gaps"** in your CV (you should give reasons for periods of around four months or more, unless they are self-explanatory – e.g. high school graduation in June and starting university in October).

The content

Personal Data

Name, address and contact details. The date and place of birth are common but no longer mandatory. All other information (e.g. marital status, religious denomination, nationality, etc.) is voluntary and can be provided if it is relevant to the application (e.g. religious denomination in the case of a church organisation).

Studies/training/education/…

Name of the university, subject(s) studied and degree sought and/or obtained, additionally e.g. specialisations and topic of the final thesis as well as current or final grade.

Practical experience/internships/professional activities

Here you must consider individually whether it makes sense to create separate sub-items for the areas or to combine them. It always depends on how much you have done and where you want to emphasise. For example, if you have completed two internships and also worked as a HIWI, it may make sense to combine them.

Side jobs

It makes sense to mention side jobs if there are not too many and they are relevant. This can be the case if, for example, they fill gaps, show that you have earned part of your living alongside your studies or have also developed skills (as a service employee, for example, it is assumed that you have stamina, stress resistance and communication skills).

Stays abroad

These can be listed as a separate category or integrated into the appropriate category (studies/internship, etc.).

Language skills/IT skills/other skills

It is important to be as precise as possible here. For example, use categories such as basic knowledge, good knowledge, very good knowledge, fluent, business fluent. Or the European Framework of Reference. Bar charts or similar graphics often provide little information about how well you know a language and are usually not machine-readable. Natural scientists sometimes also need specific methodological or laboratory skills. If you have acquired further knowledge that is relevant to this application, you can also indicate this here (e.g. as further training in the area of key qualifications).

Interests

Interests or hobbies do not have to be listed, but can emphasise certain aspects of your personality and strengths. They are particularly relevant if you practise a team sport to complement your professional skills, for example, or if your hobbies help you achieve a good work-life balance alongside a stressful job.

Place, date and signature

Place and date are still relevant. In the case of a digital application (nowadays almost the only form), there are different opinions as to whether a digital signature must be integrated, as this can of course also be copied nowadays.

The photo

It is no longer necessary to include a photo, especially if you are applying for a job in an industry where diversity is an important issue. In other areas, an application without a photo is unusual. If you do include a photo, make sure it looks professional.

Make sure that your CV can also be read using analysis software, as many companies now work with AI systems to read application documents.

As a rule, it is sufficient if you keep the following in mind:
– Do not use complex graphics, as even modern systems are often unable to recognise them.
– Use lots of keywords and, above all, use keywords that are also used in the job advert.
– Use bullet points rather than colourful descriptions.
– Use clear, pragmatic language.
– As a test, you can upload your CV to Monster or Indeed to see if your details are read correctly (but be careful, pay attention to the data protection regulations).
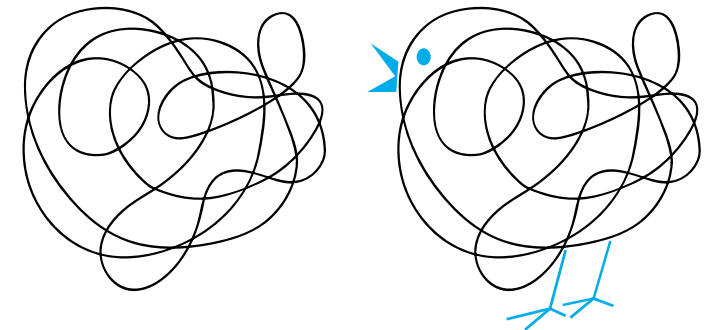
The attachments

– These usually include the degree certificate (if already available, otherwise a current transcript from ZEuS), internship certificates and, if applicable, evidence of other relevant activities or additional qualifications. Follow the order in your CV.
– You do not have to provide evidence of all the stages in your CV (this is often not even possible, e.g. in the case of volunteering or side jobs), but copies or scanned copies of the most important documents should be attached.
– When applying by e-mail, the attachments can either be attached to the cover letter and CV or formatted as a separate PDF so that you only send one or a maximum of two documents.
– The documents should be labelled with your name (not "Application to company xy").
– Please only ever send files in PDF format.
– The documents you send should not be larger than 3−5 MB (there is freeware for shrinking PDFs).

You are welcome to come to us for an application document check. We will be happy to take a look at your documents together and give you professional feedback. You can find more information here: *– uni.kn/cs/counselling*

Or visit our events: *– uni.kn/cs/events*

We wish you every success with your application!
Your Career Service Team

Career paths?

Career paths!

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