One of the most important documents you will provide an academic search committee is the cover letter. Your cover letter helps distinguish you from other applicants and demonstrates your qualifications beyond what is shown on your CV. Each cover letter should be tailored to emphasize different qualifications depending on the job/institution to which you are applying, and you should discuss cover letter standards for your field with advisors. In general, the following sections are recommended (for further details, see Cheryl E. Ball’s article “Understanding Cover Letters” on the Inside Higher Ed website):

**Introduction**
- Opens by stating the full name of the position for which you are applying, and where you found the position (e.g. “as posted on…”)
- States where you are in your degree/career (e.g. “defending in May, 2017”)
- Includes why you are applying for that position at that specific institution
- Includes a brief statement on why you are the right fit for the position

**Teaching**
- Summarizes (briefly) your teaching philosophy (refer to the Teaching Philosophies handout on uc.edu/AWC for more information)
- Provides specific examples of how you practice your teaching philosophy in the classroom
- If applicable, shows how your research interests relate to your teaching
- If applying to a teaching-focused institution, put this section before the section on your dissertation/research interests, and include examples of your experience mentoring undergraduates

**Dissertation**
- Summarizes your dissertation; roughly a sentence summary of each chapter
- Articulates why your research is important and how it contributes to your field
- If relevant, includes information about your methodology
- Connects to specifics of the job for which you are applying

**Research**
- Summarizes your publications, conferences presentations, grants, editorial contributions, etc.
- Articulates plans for future research and the articles/books you will write
- Shows you are motivated and able to research independently (a point that should be particularly emphasized for research-intensive jobs)

Questions? 
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What to Include in Your Cover Letter for the Academic Job Market

Service
- Expands on the service section of your CV by describing the work and connecting it to your teaching/research
- Shows how you are an engaged colleague who is willing to get involved in department/institution programs
- Connects to the job posting and specific needs of the department to which you are applying
- If applying for administrative job, this section should be longer and placed after your introduction

Conclusion
- States how the hiring committee will receive other documents (e.g. attached separately, uploaded, etc.)
- Includes the URL for your website/online teaching portfolio if you have one
- For some fields, lists your availability and contact information in this section

Further Resources


Questions?  Last Revised: October 2018