

WRITING A COVER LETTER

A successful cover letter “hooks” an employer in the first paragraph. The first few sentences should show that you’ve done your research about the job or internship and the organization and should make an employer want to learn more about you. A cover letter is also the first writing sample that an employer sees from you. Make every word count and make sure the final version is polished and error-free.

Before You Start

1. **Research the position.** What are its key responsibilities? What skills, knowledge and qualities are listed in the posting?
2. **Research the organization.** What is its culture? Its history? Its strategic goals? How do they describe themselves and what sets them apart? You can find this information online and through informational interviews.
3. **Identify your most relevant skills and competencies.** Then create “stories” from your experience that illustrate your competencies in the required areas.

Quick Tips

- **Be specific.** Tailor each letter to the employer and position for which you are applying. This shows the employer that you are truly interested in the job and that you took the time to research the organization.
- **Whenever possible, address the letter to a person.** Spell names correctly.
- **Be concise. Keep your letter to one page.** Be clear and avoid using flowery or boastful language.
- **Complement your resume.** Rather than repeating information from your resume, tell specific stories and use examples. The tone and content should focus on what you can do for the employer, not what they can do for you.
- **Never be negative.** Don’t apologize for not yet possessing a skill they would like to see.
- **Proofread, proofread, proofread.** Typos signal a lack of attention to detail.
- **Get feedback.** Come to the Center for Career Exploration to meet with a Graduate Career Fellow to discuss your cover letter (see Handshake for details).

How to Format a Cover Letter

Font

Use a 12-point standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, Garamond, Verdana, Helvetica, Arial).

Spacing

Set the document margins to 1 inch on all sides. Center your letter on the page and set paragraph alignment for all text to “justified.”

How to Structure a Cover Letter

First Paragraph

Tell the reader why you are writing (“I am writing to apply...”) and then go on to very specifically describe why you are interested in that specific job and that specific organization. The reader should feel that this letter was written specifically for them and is not a template you use for all jobs. Details that appeal to you about the organization and/or job are critically important to mention. (Did you notice how often we use the word “specific”?)

Second and/or Third Paragraph

Choose two or three experiences from your resume that are the best examples of your ability to do the exact job for which you are applying. Describe the situation, including

Heading

Use the standard business letter format, starting with the same heading as your resume (your name and contact information) followed by other elements separated by paragraph breaks: date, recipient address, salutation, body, closing salutation and signature.

both the action you took and the result, and how it relates to the position for which you are applying. Be very specific but brief and concise.

The second paragraph should highlight in detail your most relevant and/or impressive experience. The third paragraph should highlight the next most relevant experience.

Last Paragraph

Reiterate your interest in the organization and position. Indicate that you are available to discuss your qualifications in a personal interview. Close by stating that you look forward to hearing from the employer, and reiterating your contact information.

Sample Cover Letters

The following cover letters, while not focused on any specific industries, all have the following things in common:

- The writer indicates in the first paragraph why they are specifically interested in the position and/or the organization.
- They highlight experiences and/or skills that are specifically relevant to the reader.
- They emphasize achievements over adjectives. They provide specific details and stories that the reader would find relevant without rehashing everything they listed on their resumes.



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Exploration

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XXX
XXX Kinsley Ave, Unit XXX
Providence, RI XXX
XXX@gmail.com
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

July xxth, 202x

Boston Consulting Group
200 Pier 4 Boulevard
Boston, MA 02210

Dear BCG ADC Recruiting Team:

I am writing to express my interest in the full-time consultant role. Through independent research, conversations with current and former BCG consultants, and virtual BCG events, I have come to view this opportunity as an ideal fit for my particular set of attributes and career goals. I believe my analytical, leadership, and interpersonal skills make me an exemplary candidate.

I am currently finishing my Ph.D. in Pathobiology at Brown University. I learned about consultant roles for ADCs at BCG through Brown University's Handshake portal after being contacted by recruiter Katie Purcell. From Katie's message, I attended an information session, and set up coffee chats with current BCG consultants Harrison Monsky and Raghav Goyal. Additionally, I spoke with former BCG consultant Ryan Xu, who joined BCG directly after completing his Ph.D. in Pathobiology at Brown. These virtual events and conversations piqued my interest in a career at BCG and highlighted how Ph.D.s from STEM backgrounds have found a great fit in the company culture. I am excited about the opportunity to translate my Ph.D. skill sets to a research environment outside the laboratory as a consultant at BCG. The focus on generating hypotheses and applying quantitative analysis to solve real world problems appeals to me, and I am eager to work alongside experienced industry consultants and scientists to see firsthand how my doctoral training enhances team problem solving in a diverse and collaborative environment.

My ability to think critically and make informed decisions about how to proceed with experimental plans has been key to my success at Brown and will serve me well as I transition to a career in consulting. In my Ph.D. work, I managed three separate projects investigating how specific proteins contribute to fungal pathogenesis. In order to lead these projects effectively, I oversaw four students and delegated tasks within the group to achieve project goals on tight deadlines. Additionally, I collaborated with other laboratories to learn skills outside of my expertise. Initiating collaborations with senior scientists pushed me to expand my knowledge of protein biochemistry and led me to pilot new cellular assays in the lab, which significantly increased research output. My sense of initiative and drive to confirm central hypotheses directly resulted in publication of a co-first author paper in *Nature Microbiology*. Beyond publications, communicating multidisciplinary research to a diverse audience and receiving critical feedback has greatly contributed to the progression of my Ph.D. Though challenged due to the pandemic, finding ways to continue sharing my research beyond my immediate community remains important to my growth as a scientist and public speaker. I have presented virtually at both national and international conferences, consistently tailoring my talks to fit audiences of experts and students alike. Making science more accessible is a concept I feel strongly about, and over the past year I have also given multiple invited talks to inspire young scientists.

The strong work ethic and project leadership I have developed during my Ph.D. also extend to my involvement in activities outside of research. I am passionate about mentoring scientists within the Brown community, particularly to promote women in STEM. This led me to co-found the Brown Peer Mentors Program, where I serve as an advisor to incoming Ph.D. students. As an advisor, I work with students from various backgrounds, as well as university administration, to plan social events and networking workshops focused on transitioning into research and future opportunities for Ph.D.s. My commitment to exploring Ph.D. job opportunities has highlighted management consulting as a career path of interest. I hope to further utilize, and expand upon, my mentorship and interpersonal skills from my peer advisor experience as a consultant at BCG.

I am dedicated to collaborative research, passionate about sharing my results with others, and keen to explore ways in which my organizational, time management, and data analysis skills can be applied to a career in consulting. My strong scientific background and desire to use my knowledge to help solve diverse problems outside of academia align with the work done at BCG. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Student Name

Student Name
xx Smithfield Road, APT xx
North Providence, RI 02904

October x, 202x

Novo Nordisk USA
Clinical, Medical and Regulatory Department
800 Scudders Mill Road
Plainsboro, NJ 08536

I am writing to express my sincere interest in joining the Clinical, Medical and Regulatory department at Novo Nordisk as a Clinical Data Science and Evidence Fellow. I am incredibly excited at the prospects of this position because of the lifesaving scientific breakthroughs in chronic disease care occurring at Novo Nordisk, many of which my own family members benefit from in their daily treatment of diabetes, motivates me to contribute robust real world evidence (RWE) to support the healthcare needs of families like my own and to people worldwide. My academic training and professional experience are illustrative that I can excel at the role's responsibilities of leading observational research, preparing protocols, collaborating with stakeholders and all other important functions. I expect to complete my PhD dissertation in Epidemiology at Brown University in February 2024, and I am aiming to combine causal inference theory and practice to address urgent chronic disease care needs. I believe my passion for improving healthcare needs of patients, computational skills, tenacity, problem-solving skills and collaborative nature will make me an ideal fit for this position.

My passion for public health and healthcare developed during a three-year post-baccalaureate fellowship at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). At IHME, I developed a unique set of technical skills as I utilized advanced machine learning algorithms and pioneered sophisticated disease models to estimate disease prevalence and mortality for tuberculosis, HIV, and six other infectious diseases for 204 countries. This work had international impacts as I collaborated with researchers and policymakers across the world in Europe, Asia and Africa to answer important disease burden questions and inform evidence-based health policies. It brought me immense excitement to see that our results and actionable conclusions informed real-world policy in the US and across the world. Besides developing exceptional analytic skills, I gained valuable communications skills as I regularly had to present my ideas and study findings in foreign environments during frequent meetings with various ministries of health across the globe, skills that I am excited to translate to my role at Novo Nordisk. Being a Fellow, I would get many similar opportunities to solve even larger problems utilizing real world data and analytics while supporting dissemination efforts of study findings. The impact that I would have in solving real world healthcare problems with a global impact is my strongest motivation to join Novo Nordisk.

I transitioned to a PhD program at Brown because there were new causal inference methods that I wanted to refine to address new healthcare questions in a post COVID world. At Brown, I've been able to collaborate with statisticians and clinicians to address health system resiliency questions including how the pandemic disrupted healthcare delivery using large datasets. I first authored 4 peer reviewed manuscripts with this work and was invited to give presentations to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The work that I conducted with this team and presentations were instrumental to the team receiving a \$1 million grant from the BMGF and an additional \$600,000 grant from the UK Health Foundation. Besides demonstrating research excellence, I've also shown the resiliency, composure, and initiative during my PhD to excel in this fellowship. Throughout my doctoral program, I actively sought out opportunities to take on new tasks for developing new skills by implementing novel causal inference methods in research studies, teaching courses for the first time and beginning a new leadership role at IHME. I completed these additional tasks while meeting urgent deadlines in my research teams at both Brown and IHME. If provided the opportunity, I would similarly take advantage of unfamiliar tasks at Novo Nordisk to become an expert in RWE studies while providing high-quality work.

I am dedicated to a strong work ethic, working in diverse teams, communicating effectively, and delivering in complex and collaborative environments. By bringing my strong academic background, research experience, and resiliency, I believe I can learn and contribute to Novo Nordisk's commitment to solving some of the worlds' leading chronic disease healthcare challenges. I very much look forward to an opportunity to elaborate further on my skills and qualifications.

Sincerely,

Student Name



September x, 202x

Human Resources
University of Massachusetts Amherst
330 Whitmore Building
181 Presidents Drive
Amherst, MA 01003

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

Please accept my application for the position of Associate Director of the DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. I am currently a Ph.D. candidate at Brown University's Department of German Studies, where I specialize in Politics and Poetics of the Archive. My dissertation "T a k i n g (A) P a r t – Poetological Excursions into the Fallow Fields of History" will be defended in March 202x. The exploration of alternative historiographies that I perform in my dissertation has evolved from both my academic interests and my extensive prior training and work in the film and library sector. After reading your job announcement, I am convinced that my background and scholarly research have uniquely prepared me for this position, which would allow me to contribute both my academic and practical experience to the DEFA Film Library within its broader university context.

What sparked my immediate interest in this position is its multifunctional aspect. It covers the organizational and operational requirements of distinct administrative activities, and brings these together with the goal of developing and promoting academic outreach to support strategic thematic orientation of an incredible and unique archival research institution. My early training and professional background were in international film- and media production. I built upon this with five years' experience working in the library sector, and especially in the Film Library of the Department for Theater, Film and Media Studies at the University of Vienna. There, I discovered and deepened my passion for film as a form for critical theoretical engagement, and my appreciation for the film-archive as a place for transdisciplinary exchange concerning larger cultural-historical and socio-political contexts and inquiries. I was responsible for the physical resources of the archival holdings, the acquisition and digitization of multiple audio-visual formats, as well as the maintenance of the cataloguing database and search-engine. In addition, I also oversaw and assisted research and programming projects by students, research-fellows, and faculty. My work covered curatorial and advisory functions, but also the administration management of the renting and processing of archival film material to cultural and educational institutions (including managing legal compliance and screening rights). This extensive experience of promoting film for educational purposes, which includes being involved in administrative processes, is something I continue to draw on in my own academic endeavors to this day. I cannot highlight enough how much the DEFA Film Library's strong emphasis on inviting and connecting scholars and filmmakers, creating diverse national and international research-platforms and -projects, as well as the value it places upon a close-knit teamwork approach, seamlessly aligns with my personal belief in the importance of working collaboratively and across disciplines in an academically and artistically diverse community.

At Brown University, I advanced and expanded my Ph.D. experience by exploring a range of extra-curricular work experiences. In developing and crafting a wide range of programming and workshop projects, almost all with film-specific focus, I further developed my event management and grant writing skill. I also had the opportunity to work with scholars and artists from many disciplinary backgrounds. Here I have always perceived my role as collaborative. Working with others to invite and bring together multiple voices and create different perspectives was among my biggest pleasures. Some highlights for me were a co-curated program around Harun Farocki's *Workers Leaving the Factory* (which involved DEFA film-material), co-hosted with guest-scholar Gertrud Koch; a two-day event organized for the Film-Thinking Series of the Cogut Institute for the Humanities at Brown University, in which I invited filmmaker Filipa César to present her work and reflect critically with undergraduate students on how to compose and fabulate (lost) archives; and most recently, a curated film-series on *New German Cinema* at its 60th anniversary. In all of my organizing and programming responsibilities, I constantly reflect on film as a specific tool for thinking and creating discourse, and on film history as not just subsumed under a national history, but an active force that shapes (trans)national identities and ideas in ways that build on but also present alternatives to these histories. In this regard, I was particularly excited to see the DEFA Film Library's prior and current involvement with the Black German Heritage & Research Association, as this relationship also mirrors my personal commitment to diversity and inclusion, not just as a theoretical ideal, but as a form of practice.

As a teacher at the University of Vienna and at Brown University, I mentored and advised bachelor's and master's degree students in developing and formulating their own ideas. I strive to expose students to the relationships between artistic forms (films, performances, literary texts) and a critical language that engages attentively and consciously with the formal aspects of the examined works. To this end I designed a survey course which investigated the history of Ethnographic Film through the lens of a postcolonial perspective. In this course I invited students to engage with archival film material and to find different ways to present their ideas and findings, such as in original films, performances lectures, sound-installations. My passion and commitment for working intensively with students at all levels to help them develop ideas and manage resources will translate well to the role of supervising and maintaining the necessary performance standards, scheduling, and work assignments, that come with this position.

In taking up the unique opportunity this job-posting offers, I look forward to combining my academic intellectual curiosity and extra-curricular experiences, and to further my goal of contributing actively to a film-research platform that forges strategic partnerships and provide the means for a thriving intellectual community, while achieving the short-term and long-term goals necessary for funding this vision.

I believe that I am a great candidate for this position. I am eager to take on new challenges while working as a part of your team, and I would be thrilled to join the Amherst community. For all these reasons, I look forward to an interview to elaborate further on my skills and qualifications, and can best be reached by email at xxx_xxxx@brown.edu.

Sincerely,

Student Name

Date: May X 202x

To the Advanced Degree Holders Recruitment Team,
Bain & Company,
190 S LaSalle St Suite 3400,
Chicago, IL 60603

I am writing to express my sincere interest in joining Bain and Company as a full-time Associate. I learnt about Bain's unique problem-solving capabilities and strong emphasis on teamwork through attending networking sessions hosted by the CareerLab at Brown University. Coffee conversations with the Bainies at the event got me excited and I got connected with mentors like Karen Dawson from the Boston Office who bridged my understanding between a PhD program and Consulting. Independently, I had the opportunity to connect with Arpit Agarwal from the SF office who also emphasized the role of analytical thinking, and how it developed a CEO mindset in his work. Additionally, talking to Aditya Poonia from the Chicago office, I believe that learning and contributing to such an organizational environment will help me improve and leverage my expertise in Energy Generation and Storage.

I started my career as a Battery Design Engineer at Sony Energy Devices in Fukushima, Japan. Working at a Japanese company taught me how to solve complex problems in a highly collaborative environment. I also learnt how to communicate and present my ideas in a foreign environment, skills that I am excited to translate to my Consulting journey. I demonstrated my commitment to communication by taking additional Japanese lessons after work, and this had a positive impact on my team dynamics. Leveraging these strengths, I was able to file 2 technology patents relating to the batteries I had designed which are now a part of Smartwatches and Earphones that I see my friends and family use. It brings me immense pleasure to see that my small contribution to the design has been able to positively impact my community. Being a Management Consultant, I would get many such opportunities to solve even larger problems with clients. The impact that I would have in solving real world problems is my strongest motivation to join Consulting.

The major reason I transitioned to a PhD Program at Brown was because Industry had not been able to solve a problem faced by Solid-State Batteries, a technology I have been passionate about due to its potential to revolutionize Energy Storage. While despite the best efforts these batteries would routinely fail, there was no unique model explaining its failure. At Brown, I was able to leverage my background and independent problem-solving capabilities to deliver a model that prevents battery failure using Ion Exchange, a method that is traditionally used in the glass strengthening industry. Our work was published in Chemistry of Materials and I was invited to present this work at the Materials Research Society, which is the largest materials science conference in the world. Adapting a solution from one industry and deploying it to solve problems in a different industry, is a skill that I have developed during my PhD. I am excited to improve and use these to tackle client problems.

During my time at Brown, I have led teams to improve our community in a post COVID world. As the President of the Brown Engineering Graduate Council, I have rekindled the sense of community that people lost due to years of social isolation, by organizing regular socials, lunch events and an intramural sports championship. Talking to other students about their career plans post PhD, there was a strong interest in Management Consulting. I realized that many students were excited about case preparation, and networking, however, there was no formal consulting club at Brown catering to our needs. With the help of my solid team, I have been able to setup the Brown Graduate Consulting Club. As its Founding President, I have been able to serve my community by hosting case solving sessions and forming case groups. One of the strongest influences on my time as a community leader has been mentoring the younger graduate students to help them overcome their challenges, teaching them the skills to transform them to be the leaders of tomorrow. I believe that I will find positive mentorship and the ability to mentor at Bain, both of which I cherish.

I am dedicated to a strong work ethic, solving problems, working in diverse teams, and delivering in complex environments. By bringing my strong academic background, industry experience and leadership skills, I believe I can learn and contribute to Bain's commitment to solving some of the world's leading challenges. I also enjoy travelling, and learning new languages, having backpacked 14 countries, and lived in 5. Bain's unique staffing model would allow me to explore the greater Chicago Area and enjoy the Midwest, while getting the chance to travel. Thus, working as an Associate at Bain aligns well with my goals. Thank you for your consideration and time.

Looking forward to this journey.

Yours sincerely,

Student Name

xxx_xxxx@brown.edu | xxx-xxx-xxxx
xx Governor St. Providence, RI 02906, USA

Philips
222 Jacobs St
Cambridge, MA 02141
United States

April 2x, 202x

Dear Philips Hiring Manager,

I am writing to express my interest in the Scientist – AI Based Medical Ultrasound Imaging Analysis role at Philips. As a biomedical engineer with a strong background in data science, I am excited by the data-driven innovation that Philips is bringing to the healthcare field. During my doctoral training, I leveraged large clinical trial MRI datasets and artificial intelligence to create a fast, scalable approach to identifying orthopaedic biomarkers for risk of reinjury and arthritis. This experience has driven me to continue seeking healthcare domains in which artificial intelligence-enhanced imaging may substantially improve the standard of care, as Philips is also pursuing.

In addition to the technical skills that I developed over the course of my doctoral research, it was an invaluable experience in operating as part of a multidisciplinary team of engineers, clinicians, MRI physicists, statisticians, and data scientists. This required communicating results and formulating questions across domains of expertise within the team, as well as presenting externally at scientific conferences. To educate non-data scientist members of the team, I led a series of workshops on Python and artificial intelligence. Furthermore, this research project gave me the opportunity to lead a team of data scientists and biomedical engineers to solve other challenges related to my thesis, such as image artifact correction.

All of these skills would be directly applicable to the Scientist – AI Based Medical Ultrasound Imaging Analysis position at Philips. I would welcome the opportunity to apply my current skillset to solving challenges in the biomedical space, and especially to continue to learn and grow by working with the Philips team. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Student Name