

Writing a Covering Letter

Judith Mudge

Email: jmudge@waikato.ac.nz

Gwenda Pennington

Email: gwenda@waikato.ac.nz

Kelly Devoy

Email: kmdevoy@waikato.ac.nz

Website: www.waikato.ac.nz/scholarships



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

We recommend that you write a covering letter for every scholarship application which you complete, unless the regulations of the award state that you should not. This gives you a chance to introduce yourself, and to explain to the Selection Panel why you would be the best possible recipient for the scholarship. This is something that most application forms do not require, but which Panels may find very helpful. Also, while a CV (if this is to be included with your application) will give the Selection Panel the facts, a covering letter can give the Panel some further insight into your personal motivation and beliefs.

Most covering letters will begin by introducing the applicant, and thanking the sponsor for the opportunity to apply for the scholarship. What you cover after this really depends on the regulations of the scholarship for which you are applying, and also on the facts of which you would like the Selection Panel to be aware. Some possible options are:

Your programme of study

Some scholarships are only open to applicants studying for a certain degree, or you may be required to state your programme of study on the application form. Nevertheless, you may wish to expand a little on what your degree involves, or why you have chosen this path. Selection Panels are often looking for people who are passionate about what they do; this is a good opportunity to express this.

Your financial situation

You may or may not choose to include information about your financial situation in your covering letter. On the one hand, if this factor is to be taken into consideration, you will usually be asked to include a separate statement detailing your circumstances, so you would only need to allude to this in your covering letter. On the other hand, if you are struggling with financial difficulties of which you would like the Selection Panel to be aware, but this information is not requested elsewhere, you may wish to comment on this in your covering letter.

Your community involvement

Detailed information about your community involvement (such as dates, references, etc.) will hopefully be included in your CV, if this is to be submitted with your application. A covering letter, however, gives you an opportunity to express why you choose to contribute to the community in this way, and why this is important to you; information which may not be conveyed by your CV.

Any further details of which you wish the Selection Panel to be aware

If there is any further information of which you wish the Selection Panel to be aware, which does not seem to fit well elsewhere in your application, here is where you should include it. This could include mentioning that you would be pleased to be involved in any publicity regarding this scholarship in future years, or that you are more than happy to keep the sponsor updated on your progress with your degree.

When writing a covering letter, always ensure that you have done your homework first; make sure you have read the regulations of the scholarship well, and know what the Selection Panel will be looking for, and that you have done a little research into the organization sponsoring the scholarship. As with your whole application, ensure that it has been well proofread (both by you and a friend, if at all possible). One particular mistake worth mentioning is the 'copy and paste' error, which should be avoided at all costs! It is all very well to copy information from an earlier letter for a different scholarship – however, do make sure that all names and dates have also been updated. We know of one scholarship which was not awarded to an applicant as they had copied and pasted a paragraph which referred to the sponsor of the award being a completely different organization to the one actually sponsoring it!

Always remember; we are more than happy to help out in any way we can, so if you have any queries, don't hesitate to get in touch with us in the Scholarships Office.