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Home News

Legal Cover Letter Guide for Training Contracts and Vacation Schemes

This article will guide you through the intricacies of creating a compelling legal cover letter to help young professionals, law graduates, and law students secure training contracts, vacation schemes, and other early career positions in law. From the fundamental principles of its structure to the nuances of tailoring it to specific legal roles, we cover everything you need to know to make a strong, lasting impression on your prospective employers. What is a Legal Cover Letter? A cover letter is a personalized letter accompanying your resume/CV when applying for a job. Its purpose extends far beyond a mere formality; it is a critical component in your job application. A legal cover letter serves as a platform to convey your understanding of the law, the firm, and how your skills and experiences are aligned with what the firm seeks in a candidate. It's an opportunity to show that you are more than just your academic achievements and work experiences; you are a candidate who understands and can contribute to the legal profession. In legal job applications, a cover letter plays a pivotal role. It's not only about expressing interest in a position but also about demonstrating your legal acumen and fit for the firm's culture and values. Legal recruiters look for candidates who show a deep understanding of the law, can communicate effectively, and have a genuine interest in their specific area of practice. Your cover letter is your first chance to show that you meet these criteria. Learn how you can perfectly answer why you study law or why this law firm in our exclusive career guides. Structure of a Legal Cover Letter The structure of a legal cover letter is quite formulaic but crucial. It typically consists of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction should grab the reader's attention and provide a brief overview of who you are and what position you are applying for. The body of the letter is where you discuss your qualifications, experiences, and skills, making sure to align them with the positions requirements and the firm's values. The conclusion wraps up your letter, often with a call to action or a statement of enthusiastic anticipation for a potential interview. Cover Letter Format and Layout A legal cover letter should be written with one-inch margins on all sides, 10-12 size font in Times New Roman or Calibri, and 1.15 line spacing. It is usually not longer than one page. It is formatted like a formal letter, with your contact information at the top, followed by the date, the recipient's details, a salutation, the body of the letter, a closing salutation, and your signature. You should use professional language and keep it concise. Clarity, brevity, and professionalism are key. UK law firms often value cover letters that are succinct and to the point, reflecting the straightforward style of business communication. Additionally, understanding the UK legal market and mentioning any relevant legal work experience, like paralegal work in the UK, can be advantageous. Writing an Effective Legal Cover Letter Before starting the writing process, let's outline the key steps in writing a good legal cover letter: Step 1: Start with a Strong Opening Address the letter to a specific person and state the position you're applying for. Step 2: Engage with Personalized Introduction Tailor your introduction to the firm and the legal role, showing your knowledge and interest. Step 3: Highlight Relevant Skills and Experiences Focus on legal experiences, education, and skills that directly apply to the job. Step 4: Use Specific Examples Illustrate your abilities and achievements with specific examples from your career or education. Step 5: Conclude with a Call to Action End your letter by reiterating your interest and requesting an interview. Starting Your Cover Letter: Best Practices for Opening Lines The beginning of your cover letter sets the tone for the entire document. It should be engaging and tailored to the specific legal role you are applying for. Start by addressing the letter to a specific person if you know their name. If not, opt for a professional greeting like 'Dear Hiring Manager.' Avoid generic openings like 'To whom it may concern,' as they can come across as impersonal. The Importance of Your Opening Line The opening lines should be concise and impactful. Begin by stating the position you are applying for and where you found the listing. This not only shows your direct interest but also helps the employer understand the context of your application. A compelling start could also include a brief mention of why you are particularly interested in this role or firm, perhaps referencing a recent case or the firm's philosophy that resonates with you. Add a Personal Touch Tailoring the introduction involves showcasing your knowledge of the law firm and the specific legal position. Mention any direct connections you have to the firm, like a referral or a previous encounter with one of their lawyers. This personal touch demonstrates your proactive approach and genuine interest in the firm. Check out our questions and answers for commercial awareness questions. Body of the Cover Letter This section is where you elaborate on your qualifications and experiences, connecting them directly to the needs of the job and the culture of the firm. Each law firm has its own culture and values. Whether it's their approach to corporate law, their commitment to pro bono work, or their office environment, demonstrating an understanding of what makes the firm unique is essential. It's important to balance mentioning your past experiences with how they make you an ideal candidate for the position you're applying for. What to Include: Skills, Experience, and Qualifications Focus on the most relevant experiences and skills that apply to the position. For a legal cover letter, emphasize any legal work, internships, or education. Don't just list your experiences; explain how they make you a good fit for this specific role. Use examples to demonstrate your skills, such as a successful negotiation or a research project that you completed during your LPC course. How to Write About Legal Experiences and Education When discussing legal experiences and education, be specific. Mention any particular areas of law you've studied or worked in, notable cases you've been involved with, or any research you've conducted. If you've had any significant achievements or have been recognized in your field, this is the place to highlight them. Tailor Your Cover Letter for a Law Firm It's crucial to tailor it to the specific firm's ethos, practice areas, and the role you're applying for. Research the firm thoroughly and mention aspects of their work that align with your experiences and interests. Show them why you are not just a fit for the legal industry in general but for their firm in particular. Find out more about Magic Circle law firms. Concluding Your Cover Letter The conclusion of your cover letter is your chance to wrap up your argument and leave a lasting impression. How to Effectively Conclude and Call to Action Reiterate your enthusiasm for the role at the firm, and politely express your desire for an interview. A strong conclusion reaffirms your fit for the role and can make your application memorable. The Importance of a Strong Closing in Legal Applications In legal applications, a strong closing is crucial as it demonstrates your ability to conclude arguments effectively by a key skill in the legal profession. It's also your final opportunity to express your keen interest in the position. Writing a Cover Letter for Vacation Schemes and Internships Applying for vacation schemes and internships in the legal sector requires a cover letter that not only showcases your current skills and academic achievements but also demonstrates your potential and eagerness to learn and grow within the field. These opportunities are designed to give you a taste of the legal profession and are a critical step in your career path. Understanding the Purpose of Your Application The primary goal of your cover letter for these programs should be to highlight your enthusiasm for the law, your academic accomplishments, and any extracurricular activities or previous work experiences (legal or otherwise) that demonstrate relevant skills. It's essential to convey your commitment to pursuing a career in law and your interest in gaining hands-on experience. You may go as far back as your A-Level law course or as recent as your PGDL prep course. Highlighting Academic and Extracurricular Achievements Use your cover letter to draw attention to your academic strengths, particularly in law-related subjects. Mention any law-related projects, dissertations, or presentations that you have undertaken. For example, you may have done something extraordinary during your PGDL course. Additionally, highlight your participation in extracurricular activities, especially those that demonstrate skills useful in the legal profession, such as debate clubs, moot court competitions, or volunteer work. Demonstrating Interest in the Specific Firm or Area of Law Research the firm or organization offering the vacation scheme or internship. Tailor your cover letter to reflect an understanding of what they specialize in and express why you are interested in that area of law. If the firm is known for a particular type of law, show how your interests and experiences align with this. Reflecting on What You Hope to Gain and Offer Be clear about what you hope to gain from the experience and how it fits into your longer-term career goals. At the same time, discuss what you can bring to the table. Even if you don't have direct legal experience, skills such as research, analysis, teamwork, and communication are highly relevant and valued in legal settings. The Importance of Professionalism and Clarity As with any legal cover letter, maintain a professional tone and clear structure. Ensure your passion for law and eagerness to learn come through, but balance this with a formal and respectful approach that reflects the professionalism expected in the legal field. Writing a Cover Letter for Training Contracts A cover letter for a training contract, highlight your commitment to pursuing a career in law, your understanding of the firm's area of practice, and how the training contract fits into your career plan. Be clear about why you see yourself as a part of that specific firm in the long term. Tailoring Your Approach to the Firm Each law firm has its unique characteristics and areas of expertise. Tailor your cover letter to reflect an understanding of the firm's specializations, values, and culture. Express how these align with your career aspirations and why this particular training contract appeals to you. Highlight Unique Experiences or Skills While your legal experience may be limited at this stage, focus on transferable skills and experiences that demonstrate your potential as a trainee solicitor. This could include analytical skills from academic projects, teamwork and leadership experience from extracurricular activities, or any legal work experience you may have. Demonstrating Long-Term Interest Firms want to invest in trainees who have a genuine interest in staying with the firm post-training. Express your long-term career vision and how it aligns with the opportunities at the firm. Show that you have a keen interest in growing within the firm and contributing to its future successes. Conveying Enthusiasm and Professionalism Your enthusiasm for the law and the specific training contract should shine through in your cover letter. However, balance this enthusiasm with professionalism, showing that you understand the serious commitment of a training contract and are ready to meet its challenges. Articulate Your Vision for Contributing to the Firm Instead of just focusing on what you hope to gain from the training contract, turn the tables. Articulate a vision of how you see yourself contributing to the firm. Maybe you have ideas for community engagement initiatives or are interested in contributing to the firm's legal research publications. Legal CV vs Legal Cover Letter The CV and cover letter serve different purposes and complement each other. Your CV provides a factual and chronological breakdown of your education and experience. The cover letter, however, is your chance to tell a story linking your experiences and skills to the specific requirements of the job. In your CV, you list your achievements, but in your cover letter, you interpret them. Use your cover letter to explain how your experiences in your CV make you a great candidate for the specific role. It's about making connections between your background and the job description, which isn't always apparent in a CV. Find out everything about solicitor salaries in our guide. Top 5 Tips For You to Succeed Look, we want all our readers to succeed and below you will find some good tips for writing your cover letter. Tip #1: The Length of Your Legal Cover Letter The ideal legal cover letter should be one page long. Its crucial to be brief yet impactful. Every sentence should add value, focusing on your qualifications and fit for the role without unnecessary elaboration. Employers appreciate succinctness, especially in a field where clarity and brevity are valued. Remember that you can always get help with cover letters if you have a disability. Tip #2: What Not to Include in a Legal Cover Letter Avoid repeating your resume verbatim; your cover letter should complement, not duplicate, your CV. Stay away from overly personal information or anecdotes that don't directly relate to your legal qualifications or the job. Also, avoid clichés and general statements that don't specifically relate to the firm or the position. Tip #3: Addressing the Cover Letter To Whom It May Concern is overly generic and can suggest a lack of effort in researching the firm. Whenever possible, address the letter to a specific person, such as the hiring manager or the partner in charge of the recruitment process. If you can't find a name, use a targeted title such as Hiring Committee or Recruitment Team. Tip #4: Customize for Each Application Do not just copy and paste your cover letter and change the firm's name. You must actively tailor your cover letter. Put effort into researching each firm's speciality and culture. Tailor your letter to reflect their language, values, and requirements. Show a clear, genuine interest in what makes each firm unique. Tip #5: Proofread Multiple Times Remember that even a tiny error can make you seem incompetent, even if you are the most educated person out there. Employ various techniques like reading aloud and peer review to catch errors. Take breaks between reviews for clarity. Ensure consistency in formatting and style, and don't over-rely on spellcheck tools, as they might miss nuanced errors. Frequently Asked Questions Below you will find answers to the most commonly asked questions: How can an applicant effectively research a law firm to tailor their cover letter more specifically to that firm? You must go beyond the firm's website. Attending industry networking events, seminars, or lectures where representatives of the firm are present offers a chance for firsthand observation and even brief interactions. Additionally, seeking out alumni from one's law school who currently work at the firm can provide insider perspectives. These individuals can often shed light on the less-publicized aspects of the firm's culture, such as its approach to work-life balance, internal promotion practices, or specific initiatives that are highly valued. You are likely to be asked to complete a psychometric activity during your job application process; make sure you are prepared with our Watson Glaser Test guide. What are some common mistakes in legal cover letters that can negatively impact an applicant's chances? A frequent mistake in legal cover letters is an overemphasis on academic achievements at the expense of demonstrating practical skills and experiences. Law firms seek candidates who can apply legal knowledge in real-world contexts. Thus, an effective cover letter balances academic prowess with examples of practical application, like participation in moot trials or pro bono legal clinics. Moreover, generic statements about the law firm or its achievements can backfire. You shouldn't just praise the firm; you must link its achievements to your own experiences, creating a narrative that positions you as a natural fit. How should an applicant handle gaps in their legal experience or education when writing a cover letter? When confronted with gaps in your legal experience or education, you should focus on complementary experiences that have helped develop transferable skills. For instance, if you have a gap in your legal career due to working in a different industry, you should highlight how the skills acquired there (such as negotiation, analysis, or client management) are beneficial in a legal context. It's about reframing the narrative to focus on diverse experiences contributing to a well-rounded legal professional. In what ways can an applicant demonstrate their potential for long-term growth and contribution to a law firm? To show potential for long-term growth, you need to articulate your vision for your career and how it aligns with the firm's trajectory. This could involve discussing your interest in specific legal areas where the firm is a leader, expressing enthusiasm for participating in the firm's ongoing initiatives or reflecting on how your personal and professional values resonate with those of the firm. For instance, if a firm is known for its innovation in legal tech, you might talk about your eagerness to contribute to and learn from these pioneering practices. This approach demonstrates not only your research and alignment with the firm but also your ambition and forward-thinking mindset. The best law cover letter examples have a clear structure, such as: 1. The introduction to your cover letter Introduce yourself, explain what stage you are at in your degree course (including the university you're attending), state that you are applying for a training contract and where you read about the law firm. This should only be a sentence or two. 2. A paragraph on why you want to work at that law firm The second paragraph should cover why you want to be a solicitor and why you want to work for that law firm in particular. Highlight any experiences you've had that have convinced you that you want to be a solicitor, such as vacation schemes, open days or insight days. You can even mention mini-pupillages if you've put the effort into comparing the two sides of the legal profession, as long as you have good reasons for picking a career as a solicitor (this could come up at interview). Make it clear why you want to work in the particular area of law that the firm focuses on. For example, if it's a commercial firm you'll want to draw on any work experience you've had at other commercial firms. Show off your research about the firm by explaining your interest in their main legal practice areas. Don't just say 'I'm interested in shipping law,' for example, but provide evidence of that interest. You might also want to mention the firm's training structure. Some firms will have compulsory seats, in which case you'll need to show an interest in those areas. If you've chosen a firm that doesn't have compulsory seats, or has no seat structure at all (such as Jones Day for example), then you could explain why this appeals to you above a more defined training contract structure. 3. A paragraph highlighting why you're a good fit for the law firm Next, you need to pitch yourself to the recruiter. Make it clear that you are suited to a career as a solicitor; highlight achievements that show you have the competencies the firm has asked for. If the firm hasn't specified exactly what it's looking for, see our article here on the skills most legal recruiters want from applicants. Don't just say 'I have good communication skills,' you need to mention an achievement that hinged on your use of those skills. 4. The ending to your law covering letter Close by referring the recruiter to your CV or application and stating your availability for interview(s) or assessment centre(s). How to write a law cover letter tip #4: explain any extenuating circumstances Covering letters should also explain any mitigating circumstances relating to your results and to address any questions that you may reasonably expect to arise from your application, such as any gaps in your CV, explains Janine. How to write a law cover letter tip #5: proofread your cover letter before you hit send Once you've put your covering letter together, don't be tempted to rush it off. Ask friends, family and your university careers adviser to check it. There is no good excuse for spelling errors, especially when you're applying for a job that requires scrupulous attention to detail, points out a legal recruitment adviser at Ince & Co. The number of applications we receive that contain errors is surprising. Your application is all we've got to go on, so you owe it to yourself to ensure it's not let down by something so easily avoidable. Remember that law firms will be judging your ability to communicate professionally with clients on the professionalism of your covering letter. You're making a pitch, just like you would do as a practising lawyer. Legal recruiters at major law firms read through hundreds, if not thousands, of applications from aspiring trainee solicitors each year and will only spend a minute or so reading your covering letter. Some recruiters say that they make their decision paragraph by paragraph if you haven't impressed upon them that you would be a good fit for their firm halfway through the cover letter, so they might not even read the rest. Your covering letter creates a powerful first impression, so make it easy for the recruiter to see that you have strong potential as a solicitor by following the tips above. In other news: Massive changes to the way solicitors qualify are on the horizon. Do you know how they will affect you? Find out here. When applying for a job you should check the instructions carefully to see what the employer is asking for, such as a CV and covering letter, or an application form. Before you write your application, check the requirements for the role these will normally be listed in a job description or person specification and think about how you can show that you have them. Research the organisation, so that you can explain why you're suited to work there. Check that your CV covers all the requirements, and tailor it if necessary. What to include if the employer asks for a CV, you should also write a covering letter that is tailored for the role. This is your opportunity to say how you meet the requirements for the role. It should show that you understand what the employer is looking for and that you know about the organisation. Include: your contact details which role you're applying for why you're interested in the role how you meet the requirements for the role relevant skills and experience reference to relevant parts of your CV any specific information that the employer asks for, such as salary expectations Check the advert and the job description, and make sure that your covering letter includes all of the requirements if possible. Give evidence to back up your claims. Do not just say that you are good at team working or research give an example, such as a project you have worked on. End the letter on a positive note, saying when you're available for interview and that you look forward to hearing from them. Format Your covering letter should be concise around one page. You may want to send it as a Word attachment, rather than simply an email. You should make sure it is well laid out, with a consistent format and a clear font. Check carefully for spelling mistakes or other errors. Address your letter to an individual if possible. Many organisations recruit using application forms rather than CVs and covering letters. This means they can ask specific questions and easily compare applications. Application forms are designed to get the right amount of information to make a decision, so the recruiter will normally ignore anything else you provide. Often they will have a word limit for each question. However, you should be able to use information from your CV, such as your work history and your skills, to complete the form. Read through the form carefully and follow the instructions. Be clear and concise, and make sure you provide evidence of how you meet the requirements for the role. This page was printed on 30/05/2025 and the up-to-date version can be found online at Share copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution You must give appropriate credit - provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. Share Alike If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation. No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. You want your cover letter to strike the perfect balance between being professional and showing some personality. But how do you achieve this? If you write too formally, your tone may come across as stiff. If you're too casual, it may sound overly conversational. While modesty is always valued, how can you confidently present your skills without sounding arrogant or boastful? This guide will help you find the right balance, ensuring your cover letter is both professional and personable, while focusing on the key job requirements. By ExperienceBy RoleLegal cover letter example Alexander Jackson Leeds, UK +44 1234 567890 help@enhancv.com Dear Hiring Manager, I am writing to express my interest in the Legal Officer position at your esteemed organization. Known for my expertise in adult social care law, I have dedicated over eight years to driving successful outcomes and positive changes within the public sector, aligning closely with your team's mission of impactful service delivery. During my tenure as a Legal Advisor at Templeton Legal Services Ltd, I led a high-profile case that resulted in a precedent-setting decision in adult social care law. This achievement underscored my contract negotiation and case management skills, enabling local governments to safeguard client interests effectively. By streamlining adult social care processes, my team improved service delivery by 25% in just one year. I am eager to bring my collaborative approach and legal expertise to your team. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my experience and skills align with your needs in more detail. Thank you for considering my application. Sincerely, Alexander Jackson, Legal Officer Why this is a strong cover letter: Specialized Expertise: Emphasizing expertise in adult social care law, which is directly relevant to the Legal Officer role, demonstrates specialized knowledge and strengthens the candidate's fit for the position. Proven Track Record: Highlighting a concrete achievement, like leading a precedent-setting case, not only showcases the candidate's skills but also provides tangible evidence of their impact and effectiveness in prior roles. Quantifiable Outcomes: Mentioning a specific improvement, such as enhancing service delivery by 25%, quantifies the candidate's contributions and appeals to organizations looking for results-driven professionals. Alignment with Company Goals: Expressing a desire to contribute to the organization's mission aligns personal achievements and motivations with the company's objectives, presenting the candidate as a well-suited addition to the team. Cover letters provide recruiters with the opportunity to learn more about your career aspirations, hinting at how you'd integrate within the organization over the long term. Here are three additional reasons why cover letters are important: Making an excellent first impression (and a formal introduction): Your cover letter is often the employer's first introduction to you, showcasing your personality, communication skills, and motivation for the role. Complementing your career history: While your CV lists qualifications and experience, a cover letter provides the context, explaining how your background fits the role. Demonstrates your genuine interest: A well-crafted cover letter reflects the effort you've put into researching the company and role as well as your attention to detail. A great cover letter can set you apart when applying for jobs in the UK. Follow these tips to ensure you make a strong impression: Research thoroughly: Spend time delving into the company's website, social media, and industry news to understand their projects, awards, and future plans. The more specific your knowledge, the better you'll be able to demonstrate your suitability for the role. Reflect their values: Every UK company has its own set of values that guides their culture. Once you've identified them, make sure your cover letter reflects how your values and work ethic align with theirs. If they're known for integrity, emphasise your commitment to ethical practices. Tailor your skills: Focus on aligning your most relevant skills with the job description. Look for key terms and priorities mentioned in the advert, and make sure to provide examples of how you excel in those areas. Your cover letter is your opportunity to make a strong impression, so its structure must be professional and clear. Here's an overview of how a UK cover letter should be structured: Begin with your address and contact details at the top. Include the employer's name and address directly below. Add the date to the left or right of the page. Use an appropriate greeting, such as 'Dear Mr Smith' or 'Dear Sir/Madam.' Open with a strong introductory paragraph. Develop your points in the middle paragraphs, focusing on relevant skills and experience. Close with a concise conclusion, reiterating your interest and suitability for the role. Sign off formally with your name and signature. The software used to match your profile to the job, Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), won't scan your cover letter. Instead, the cover letter reads as a more personalised note to the recruiter. When it comes to choosing a font, consider modern options like Lato, Rubik, or Clivo, which should also be applied to your CV to maintain a consistent appearance. Additionally, your cover letter should be single-spaced with 1-inch (2.5 cm) margins on all sides (our templates are pre-set with these specifications so you can focus on your cover letter content). Finally, always send your cover letter as a PDF to preserve the formatting and prevent edits. It's never advisable to begin your cover letter with 'Dear Sir/Madam,' as it sounds comes across as impersonal. Take the time to find out who is hiring for the role and address them directly in your cover letter greeting (e.g., 'Dear Mrs Chanceworthy', 'Dear Harrod'). If you're uncertain where to find the hiring managers name, check the company website, look on LinkedIn, or send a courteous email requesting this information. Don't hesitate to ring reception either they are unlikely to refuse to assist. One of the best ways to grab a hiring manager's attention? Show them the unique value you'd add to the team. Review the skills or requirements listed in the posting and draw connections to your previous work experiences. Focus on specific (and quantifiable) accomplishments and qualifications that align with the job description to make a strong first impression. RIGHT You've personalised your greeting and introduction now its time to focus on writing the body of your cover letter. Instead of listing off skills and responsibilities from your CV, focus on one career highlight that's relevant to the role. Use your hard and soft skills, success metrics (e.g., percentages or sales figures), and the long-term impact it had on the company. A concise, well-told story centred on your value as a candidate will make a strong impression. RIGHT When ending your cover letter, you have two options: Option one is to promise how you'd contribute to the organisation whether that's improving a target or achieving a specific goal or how the company could help you grow professionally. Always emphasise the tangible impact you can deliver. The second option is to close by asking when you can expect to hear back from the hiring managers, whether for an update or to arrange an interview. RIGHT Your cover letter is an opportunity to showcase your personality and skills to potential employers. Start by addressing the hiring manager by name and tailoring your content to reflect the roles requirements. Include a specific example of your greatest achievement to illustrate your suitability for the position, while also expressing your enthusiasm for the company. Remember to format your letter professionally, ensuring it aligns seamlessly with your CV.

**Legal covering letter template. Legal cover letter examples. Legal cover letter uk example. Legal covering letter. How to write a legal cover letter. How to write a good legal cover letter.**