

## Speculative Applications Guide

Speculative applications involve sending a CV and covering letter to an employer to enquire about possible vacancies in the sector you are interested in. They are a good way to access the 'hidden jobs' market; in some industries it is the normal entry route to a career. It is widely understood that large proportions of jobs go unadvertised and are filled by speculative applications or through networking. You are not breaking any business protocols by sending speculative applications to organisations.

### When should speculative applications be used?

Speculative applications may be appropriate if you want to work in a particular geographical area; a highly focused field e.g. sports psychology; or if you want to work in a small but popular area e.g. broadcasting and cannot source vacancies or specialist recruitment agencies.

Smaller employers may not recruit as regularly so speculative applications may be well received; they can save the company a lot of time and money in advertising.

If you are looking for vacation work, work experience or work shadowing, approaching specific companies may be beneficial.

Speculative applications are not just effective in niche or popular areas; they are also accepted in law, civil engineering and management consultancy for example.

### How do you find contacts?

Identify one or two fields of work that you would like to go into and do some research. You could try the following:

- Visit our Jobs Board [port.ac.uk/careers](http://port.ac.uk/careers).
- Use the online Hampshire Business Directory to explore specific sectors and gather contact details on local employers.
- Look at newspaper job advertisements - even if a company is not advertising for exactly what you want, use the name and address to contact the company to ask them about the sort of work that you do want.
- Build up a network of contacts. Usually people are happy to talk about their areas of work and can provide you with further contacts. Academic staff, particularly in business and technology departments, may have excellent links with local industry and commerce, which could help you develop your network.
- Gaining work experience through paid or voluntary work can help you generate a good network of contacts. You can then use this when applying for positions.
- LinkedIn - You can use LinkedIn to search for companies who employ people in the sort of job role that you are interested in or local companies operating in your sector of interest.

## **Making the application:**

The speculative application requires a CV and covering letter. To write a good speculative letter, you need to have carried out some thorough research using the resources detailed in the previous section. You need to decide what you can do for the potential employer based on your knowledge of what they do. When you've found out all you can and considered the skills, aptitudes and experience that you have to offer, you're ready to contact them.

- Wherever possible target your speculative letter to a named individual. You can usually find this information out by phoning the company and asking who is responsible for recruitment for the section you are interested in.
- Your covering letter should target the company you are applying to - a standard letter is dull and will not be read with interest. Explain why you want to work for the company and what you think you can bring to the position.
- A follow up phone call will demonstrate your enthusiasm for working for the company; if you plan a follow up call say so in your covering letter.
- Specify what you are actually looking for; avoid unfocused requests e.g. "anything suitable for my qualifications and experience".
- Your application may be kept on file for several months if there is nothing suitable now. Get back in touch in a couple of months to remind the company you are still interested.
- If you are sending out a number of speculative letters, ensure that you keep a record of who you have contacted and when.
- Our advisers can provide feedback and advice on your CV and Covering Letters. We offer a drop-in service so just call into the centre during our opening times.

## **Template:**

The following speculative letter template is provided as an initial guide to help you to develop your own approach. It is important that you modify your letter according to the employer you are targeting.

I am writing to you regarding any employment opportunities that \_\_\_\_\_ may have for a \_\_\_\_\_.

As you will see from my enclosed CV, I have had considerable experience of working with people from a variety of different backgrounds. I am a \_\_\_\_\_ who is skilled at \_\_\_\_\_.

(Paragraph on specific work experience and why you are interested in the company / organisation)

My relevant qualifications include \_\_\_\_\_.

I believe that my skills and experience could be of value to you and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further. I will call your office within the next few days to see if we can arrange a suitably convenient date and time.

## **Need more information or support?**

Visit our website at [port.ac.uk/careers](http://port.ac.uk/careers) for further information and advice or visit us at the Careers and Employability Centre.