

COVER LETTER, CV AND PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

Use this guide to tick off whether you have considered and applied each of these points to your application to make it as strong as possible.

COVER LETTER

<p>Find out – Find out if the practice prefers digital or printed copies (In most instances it will be digital). Also, ring the practice and find out who to address the cover letter to if it's not already mentioned on their website/ job advert.</p>	
<p>Keep to one page - Just a few paragraphs are enough. Remember that the people reading this will see a lot of cover letters and they want the important information to stand out as they skim read.</p>	
<p>Job role - Include which job/position you are applying for at the beginning of the text.</p>	
<p>Font - Choose a font that is easy to read. Do not go below 11 font size. Also ensure there is enough space between the lines so that the text is more easily legible.</p>	
<p>Date - Include the date that you are sending your application. This will make it easier for the practice to track your application.</p>	
<p>Why - Early in the text, state clearly why you are applying to that practice. Try and cover this over just a couple of sentences, making it clear and concise is more effective than including loads of generic reasons.</p>	
<p>Project - You might want to mention one or two of the practice's projects that you particularly like. Perhaps you read about them in a recent article. Mention why you like them, what interests you about those projects? How do you know of the practice?</p>	
<p>Layout - Consider the layout of the cover letter. Are you purposefully justifying the text to give it a clear and crisp outline? Does the text sit comfortably in the middle of the page without being overcrowded? Simple stuff but it makes for a better first impression at first glance.</p>	
<p>Style - It is better if the cover letter and CV are using the same fonts and are in the same style. So, without reading anything, someone would know they are from the same application. This might be done with similar borders, lines to break up text, symbols, colours etc. Be graphically creative whilst keeping the text clear and with some white space to 'let the page breathe'.</p>	
<p>Spell check - If possible, ask someone else to proofread your cover letter. Or at least leave your laptop/ computer to do something else and then read it carefully one last time before hitting send.</p>	
<p>Company name - Double check you have the correct company name throughout. When duplicating and changing cover letters, you run the risk of forgetting to change a detail.</p>	

CV

<p>Style – The style should match your cover letter and preferably also your portfolio. This includes use of graphics, colour scheme, font and font size.</p>	
<p>One page – Stick to one page max! A common mistake is to include too much information. You need the important points to stand out and it's difficult for that to happen with an overload of text.</p>	
<p>LESS IS MORE - Keep it as concise as possible and aim to have some white space so that the CV is easier to follow.</p>	
<p>Headings – Use a bigger size or boldness for headings so that they can be easily located by the eye.</p>	
<p>Interests – Include a small list/ sentence of your interests. It is important to get across to the employer a sense of your personality. Remember practices are not only looking for people with the skills but also people who will fit in the team well or perhaps bring something different to the office.</p>	
<p>Do Not – Do not include a picture of yourself. You will be employed based on your experience and skills, therefore there is little point wasting the space.</p>	
<p>Skills – As well as any software skills be sure to include other skills such as hand drawing or model making. Also, don't be afraid to add non architecture skills that might make you stand out. Perhaps you're a skilled painter, music mixer etc.</p>	
<p>Voluntary work – Include any volunteering you have done even if it's not specific to architecture.</p>	
<p>Reference - Try and put two references including their phone number and email address. If you are Part 1, make sure you put your tutor. If you are Part 2, try and put one educational and one professional. Avoid writing 'references available upon request'.</p>	
<p>Contact Details – Your CV should include your up-to-date contact details including mobile, address and email address.</p>	

PORTFOLIO

<p>Do Not – Put too many images on one page. 4 maximum is in general a good rule. Don't be afraid to have white space around an image. For some images, consider if it is appropriate to display it on the page in the same way you would see it in a gallery, with space around for you to better appreciate it. For other images, it might be more appropriate for a full bleed image.</p>	
<p>Graphically – Ideally your portfolio will use the same font / font size and layout style as your CV and cover letter so that they become a set of coherent documents.</p>	
<p>Pages – Unless otherwise stated, between 10 to 20 pages is usually ideal.</p>	
<p>Dividing pages – It might be appropriate to have title pages to divide different project to make it clearer. This is personal preference but worth experimenting to see what works for your portfolio.</p>	
<p>File size – Should not exceed 10MB. It is important to check that your PDF opens quickly. Employers will not wait for a portfolio to load and above all else they will find it annoying.</p>	
<p>Mixture – If possible include a mixture of CAD, physical models, details, masterplan, feasibility, hand drawings. Showing projects at different stages and through different mediums will make your portfolio stronger.</p>	
<p>Ordering work – The best order is chronological with most recent first. If you are Part 2 graduate order it as MArch Uni work, then Part 1 placement, then Degree Uni work. This will make it much clearer to the employer. If you are Part 1 start with your 3rd year project and work backwards.</p>	
<p>Your contribution - If you are including group work or examples from working in professional practice, it is important to put a small note about your contribution. Did you design it? Did you build the 3D model? Do the render with Photoshop? etc</p>	
<p>Description – Include a small description of the project. What is the typology? Is it a school, community centre, museum etc? It might be clear to you but to someone with fresh eyes on the project, not so much. Where is the project site? What materials does it use? However, don't overdo it with text, the reader should be able to skim over the text and read it quickly.</p>	
<p>Proofread – Remember that InDesign is not the best at picking up grammatical or spelling mistakes so check over the text in your document thoroughly before sending.</p>	
<p>Other – You might want to consider including something else that isn't architecture related exactly but shows a particular skill or element of personality at the back of your portfolio.</p>	

Sending - When emailing the application (unless stated otherwise by the practice) it is best to combine the 3 documents into one convenient PDF that opens quickly and can be easily flicked through. In the email write which role you are applying for and that you have attached the documents for their consideration.

GOOD LUCK!