



COVER LETTER AND THANK YOU LETTER GUIDE *for* International LL.M. Students



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A. COVER LETTERS

I. Overview - What Is a Cover Letter?

A cover letter should accompany your resume to a potential employer, unless the employer specifically requests otherwise. A cover letter should have two objectives: 1) it is a marketing tool, which allows you to highlight your skills to the potential employer; and 2) it is a writing sample, which allows you to demonstrate writing and editing skills.

II. The Purposes of a Cover Letter

The cover letter is a critical piece of your application to a potential employer. It is your single best opportunity to get the attention of someone who is in the position to hire you, if you can be convincing in articulating why your unique background and skills will add value to his or her particular practice group. Like your resume, your cover letter also serves as:

- A writing sample that employers will critique. Thus, your cover letter must be error-free, well-written and most importantly, compelling.
- Use your cover letter as an opportunity to market yourself to potential employers by highlighting your strengths. Do not simply restate your resume, the most common mistake made by students when writing a cover letter.
- The best cover letters provide some insight into your abilities beyond what is included on your resume. U.S. employers seek certain qualities in LL.M. students, especially with respect to candidates from non-common law countries, such as strong communication and writing skills, relevant legal experience, contacts in their home countries, useful language abilities, and demonstrated excellence in school, among other things.
- Contemplate what qualities you have that will impress employers, and be sure to highlight those qualities in your cover letter.
- Be mindful that a U.S. employer may not be familiar with the LL.M. program or have had any experience in hiring an LL.M. (some may not even know how to evaluate your credentials when trying to decide whether to offer you an interview), which is why it is critically important to get your cover letter and resume into the hands of the right person at the organization who can appreciate your unique skills and background.

III. Getting Started

Before you write:

- Think about the skills, abilities, background and experience that make you a good candidate, and then communicate those things in an engaging manner.
- Focus on two or three selling points which you want to convey to the potential employer, and give concrete examples.

- Focus on what you have to offer the employer.
- Research each potential employer.
- Draft a good generic letter.
- Customize your letter for yourself and for each employer.
- Be professional.

When you write:

- Keep the cover letter to one page.
- Avoid using abbreviations, contractions and shortcuts.
- Write in a business letter format.
- Write a personalized letter. If writing to an attorney in a firm that has a recruiter, always copy (cc) the recruiter. However, if you are not sure to whom you should send your cover letter, it is acceptable to write to the hiring partner or head of recruiting at a firm or to the executive director of a nonprofit.
- If you do not have the name of an individual, write “Dear Sir or Madam” (not “To Whom It May Concern”).
- Proofread your letter and thoroughly check for accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Be clear, concise, flawless and positive.
- Answer any obvious questions raised by your application (e.g., geographic connection).
- Tailor your letter to the specific posting to which you are responding.
- Send and reference all required information with your letter (e.g., resume).

After you write:

- Verify all information in the cover letter.
- Proofread the letter again, and have someone else proofread it as well.
- Use the same font and paper as your resume.
- Call and follow up if you have not received any response after about 2 weeks.
- Keep records of the positions for which you have applied. Maintain copies of all correspondence.

IV. Cover Letter Content and Drafting

Opening Paragraph – Who You Are and What You Want

The opening paragraph should induce the reader to continue to read, and so your principal objective is to make a good first impression. Your first paragraph should explain who you are and why you are writing. Introduce yourself as an LL.M. student and specify what it is you are seeking: an internship, an associate position, etc. If you were referred to the employer by someone in particular, it is wise to point this out early in the letter so that the employer can take special notice from the beginning. Specifics about connections to the employer or ties to the city should also be included in this paragraph.

Body – Why the Employer Should Hire You

The body of the letter can range from one to two short paragraphs, depending on the organization and content of the material. This is the section in which you “sell” your experience and qualifications to the employer. Your goal here is to answer the question, “Why should the employer meet you”. Explain what you can offer, and why the employer should hire you. The body of the letter should identify your specific interests and qualifications, and explain how they relate to the employer’s particular practice area and/or what the employer is specifically looking for in a candidate. Try to reference language used by the employer in the position description in your cover letter. Give the employer exactly what they are looking for. For instance, if the firm has indicated that it seeks someone with extensive experience dealing with international merger & acquisitions skills, make certain that you specifically mention one job where you dealt with this type of transaction. In a public interest cover letter, it is important both to highlight your demonstrated commitment to the mission/work/client base of the organization through your own relevant work or life experience, and to illustrate your relevant skills.

Conclusion – Wrap Up

The last paragraph is usually the easiest one to write and can contain: (a) times you are available for an interview; (b) a brief reiteration of your interest in the employer; (c) an offer to send additional information or materials and information; (d) plans to visit the area (give several weeks lead time); (e) preferred method of contact; and (f) timing of future contacts (e.g., I will be contacting you in two weeks to...). Also, include a thank you to the employer for his or her time and consideration.

V. Outline of a Cover Letter

Name
Address Phone
number Email

Date

First and Last Name of Contact Person

Title

Employer Name

Street Address

City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name of Contact
Person:

First Paragraph: Tell the employer who you are, why you are sending your resume. State the name the position for which you are applying, and state why you are interested in working for the particular employer. If you have lived in the area or know it well, mention this. Specify your interests in the type of work the firm does and what is particularly appealing to you about the employer. The opening paragraph should be short and to the point, and should convey to the reader your purpose in writing. For instance: "I am an LL.M. student at the University of Miami School of Law and am interested in the possibility of a short-term internship with your law firm in Miami following my graduation in May 2014. Your extensive representation of corporations and financial institutions from Europe are particular appealing to me." If someone has referred you, you should open with a sentence telling the addressee who has referred you to the employer. If you have a prior connection with the person to whom you are addressing the letter or to another lawyer at the firm, you might begin your letter describing the connection.

Second Paragraph: Market yourself here. Focus on the talents and skills you possess that meet the needs of the employer. If you have had work experience, courses, publications, be sure to point out the particular achievements you have accomplished in the employer's field or type of work. Indicate why you are qualified for the job. Use the body of the cover letter to highlight items on your resume and to supplement information on your resume. Emphasize law school honors and activities, legal writing and research proficiency, and languages. For example, "Before enrolling in the LL.M. program, I worked at Webber & Webber in London where I provided foreign investment advice to many American and international clients and gained deep understanding of securities and foreign investment laws.

Note: You may add third paragraph to further explain you qualifications.

Third Paragraph: The closing paragraph should be concise. Request the opportunity to interview for a position. If it is an out-of-town interview, indicate your willingness to interview personally by stating when you will be in the area or by offering to make yourself available at the employer's convenience. If you have not done so in the opening, mention the documents that you have enclosed. Thank the employer for his/her consideration.

Si
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ely

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[leave 4 blank lines for signature (signature should always be in ink)] Your Name (typed)

VI. Cover Letter Tips

- Create an individualized cover letter for every resume you send (this typically entails tweaking your generic letter as needed).
- Be honest and professional.
- Support statements about yourself with proof.
- Demonstrate and prove your commitment or ties to the geographic location.
- Show that you have researched your potential employer and communicate something that you have learned about that specific organization or one of its attorneys.
- If you use the word “I” more than three or four times to start a sentence, alter your sentence structure so the word “I” is eliminated.
- Zero errors. Must be perfect.
- Research the employer before writing.
- Indicate your specific interest in the particular position or organization.
- Make sure to address the employer’s needs in the letter rather than why the position would be good for you.
- Use the same font and good quality bond paper that you use for your resume.
- Use single spaces.
- Avoid letters that are bland. Discuss topics in a confident and positive tone.

B. THANK YOU LETTERS

I. Introduc tion

Thank you letters allow you to: 1) thank an interviewer for his or her time; 2) remind an interviewer of similar interests discussed during the interview; and 3) reiterate your interest in a position. A well written thank you letter should be sent **within twenty-four (24) hours of the interview**, and

may set you apart from the other candidates that did not follow-up after the interview.

The lack of a thank-you letter can factor in the hiring decision. If a job candidate cannot find the time to write a brief note, the employer might wonder whether the student will be able to apply attention to detail and/or protocol on the job.

II. When and to Whom to Send Thank You Letters

Thank you letters should be sent in a variety of circumstances, not simply after an interview. For example, when someone: 1) refers you to employers; 2) offers you a position; 3) provides you with general information during an informational interview; or 4) writes a recommendation for you.

Expressing your thanks to any professional associate for their time, effort, and consideration on your behalf is common courtesy, good manners, and an excellent way to reinforce your strong interest in a particular employer. It goes without saying that you should always verbally express thanks for an employer's time and courtesy.

III. Different Thank You Letter Scenarios

a. After Initial Interviews

You should try to send thank you letters to the attorney(s) with whom you interviewed, as well as to the recruiting coordinator, if applicable.

b. After Callback Interviews

A callback or in-office interview takes an employer considerable time and effort to arrange and conduct especially when they include a meal or other refreshments. Thank you letters are almost always appropriate and appreciated after callback / in- office interviews. You should write to the attorney(s) with whom you met and the recruiting coordinator, if applicable. Do not send a form thank you letter, with only the name changed, to each person on the team that interviewed you. Letters are usually placed in a central file and it would be apparent that not much thought went into the form letter. When e-mailing a thank you to several persons within an organization, take the time to send each an individual message, not a "cc."

c. After a Recruiting Reception or Dinner

Even in a tight economy, some employers will go to some length to arrange recruiting receptions, dinners, lunches, etc. to better acquaint candidates with their organization. Employers appreciate students who do not take these efforts for granted or treat them as standard “entitlements.” Thus, it may be appropriate to express written thanks for a dinner or other event where you are an honored guest.

d. After Informational Interviews

It is critically important that you always send a written thank you to anyone who takes the time to talk with you on an informational basis (rather than for recruiting purposes) about your career goals. Informational interviews (see the Networking Guide for more information on these types of interviews) are excellent ways to learn more about fields that interest you, as well as to develop relationships with practicing attorneys.

IV. Hard Copy Business Letters, E-mails or Handwritten Notes

When you feel a thank you is necessary, how do you decide whether a traditional business letter or e-mail will be appropriate? The protocol for using e-mail for certain types of correspondence between legal employers and applicants is still evolving. Although e-mailing thank you letters is acceptable, some employers still express a preference for traditional thank you letters or a handwritten thank you note on those occasions calling for a special follow-up. A primary consideration should be given to how much of your communication to date with the employer has been by e-mail. If you are still uncertain about whether an employer is e-friendly, stick to using hard copy. Importantly, make sure you use a professional business format and tone, no matter which style thank you letter you send.

a. Hard Copy Business Letters

Hard copy letters have the advantages of being a bit more formal and reinforcing your ability to prepare professional correspondence. Hard copy letters require more effort, so they receive more attention from the writer and the reader.

b. Thank You Emails

The advantage and disadvantage of e-mail is the same – it is fast and easy. It is easy in e-mail to lapse into youthful jargon, overly casual language, or irony that does not translate well in writing. It is also easy in e-mail to

press “send” quickly without spell-checking or reviewing for grammatical mistakes, or making sure you have the right contact in the "TO" line.

c. Handwritten Thank You Notes

If you have conservative, good quality stationery and legible handwriting, a handwritten note can be appropriate under certain circumstances, such as time constraints, no access to computers and printers, and your rapport or relationship with the recipient. For example, a good handwritten note can convey great sincerity and personal interest. However, some recipients may conclude that the author is not comfortable preparing professional business correspondence. If you decide to use this method, do not send the notes on cards with greetings or decoration, neither of which is appropriate for first-time business associates. To avoid any potential mishap, hard copy business letters are generally preferred over handwritten notes.

V. Tips for Thank You Letters

The thank you letter should:

- Be absolutely free of any typographical, grammatical, or other errors.
- Be short (i.e., no more than 3 short paragraphs).
- Contain some very short reference to something you discussed (to jog the reader’s memory down the road).
- Be sent promptly after the event in question (within 24 hours, if possible).

The thank you letter should not:

- Be casual, familiar, relaxed or unusual.

SAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

Name
Address Phone
number Email

January 17, 2016

First Name Last Name
Title
Company
Address

Dear Mr. /Ms. Last Name:

I am currently pursuing my LL.M. in U.S. and Transnational Law for Foreign Lawyers at the University of Miami School of Law, and am seeking a law clerk position with your prestigious company. Your extensive representations in the telecommunications field are particular appealing to me because I am confident that working with your company would be an invaluable step toward my goal of becoming a legal counsel in the international and corporate world.

Before enrolling in the LL.M. program, I obtained a law degree in Colombia with specialization in corporate law. I worked for an international law firm concentrating in civil litigation, international arbitration, and corporate law. During my first semester in law school, I am improving my writing and legal research skills and gaining a strong foundation in international and corporate law. I am eager to put my experience, training and legal skills to use on behalf of your clients.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about this position. Thank you for your kind consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.
Sincerely yours,

Signature
Type Your Name Here

Enclosure (1)

Name
Address Phone
number Email

December 16, 2015

First Name Last Name
Title
Firm
Address

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

I am an LL.M. student at the University of Miami School of Law and am interested the possibility of a short-term internship with your law firm in New York City following my graduation in May 2016. Your extensive knowledge of corporations and financial institutions from Brazil are particularly appealing to me.

Prior to coming to the United States, I worked for Silveira & Silveira where I provided foreign investment advice to many American and international clients and gained deep understanding of securities and foreign investment laws. In addition, through the experience of drafting and negotiating various cross-border agreements, I was able to develop practical legal skills such as contract drafting and negotiation skills. At University of Miami School of Law, I further honed my legal research and writing skills and gained a strong foundation in American securities laws and banking law.

I would welcome the opportunity to interview with your firm. I plan to be in New York from January 26th to February 1st. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

(Signature)

Full Name

REFERRAL LETTER

Name
Address Phone
number Email

November 1, 2015

Laura Smith
Recruiting Coordinator
Cran & Berry
22 East State Street, Suite 222
Miami, FL 33130

Dear Ms. Smith:

Roberto Perez, of Rivero & Jones in Mexico, recommended that I contact you regarding a position as an associate with Cran & Berry. I am from Venezuela and an LL.M. student at the University of Miami School of. Enclosed for your review are copies of my resume and writing sample.

I understand from my conversations with Mr. Perez that your firm focuses on the representation of small companies in a variety of legal settings, and I am particularly interested in this kind of legal practice. In addition to my LL.M. studies, I obtained my bachelor of laws from Universidad Central de Mexico City with a Master in business law.

Currently, I am assisting Professor Tom Reynolds in the research, writing and editing of a scholarly paper discussing the Statute of Frauds in contract law. Prior to that, I worked as a senior attorney in Gomez and Gomez where I advised foreign companies with tax, immigration and financial matters. In addition, I am fluent in English, French and Portuguese.

I appreciate your consideration of the enclosed resume and would like the opportunity to learn more about your firm. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURE]

Ruben Martinez

Enclosure (2)

RECENT GRADUATE

Name
Address Phone
number Email

December 20, 2015

First Name Last Name
Title
Firm/Company
Address

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

I am writing to express my interest in the Senior International AML Analyst position with your prestigious institution. I obtained my LL.M. in Comparative Law from the University of Miami School of Law in May 2015 and I am a certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialist CAMS since June 2008. In addition, I obtained a law degree from University of Madrid in Spain.

As the enclosed resume indicates, I worked for IPSA International as a Senior Legal Analyst where I provided due diligence analyses for major financial institutions in the U.S. and Europe. Prior to that, I served as a legal consultant and commercial representative for major consulting companies providing legal advice on all aspects of anti-money laundering rules and regulations and establishing new programs and best practices according to the national and international regulations.

Due to the aforementioned AML experience, and my strong desire to pursue an analyst position, I am confident that I would make a positive addition to your staff. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my qualification. Thank you for your kind consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Name

Enclosure (1)

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW REQUEST

Name
Address Phone
number Email

October 28, 2015

First Name Last Name
Title
Firm/Company
Address

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

I am an LL.M. student at the University of Miami School of Law, and a fellow LL.B from University of Whales in the United Kingdom. I am considering concentrating my studies in international alternative dispute resolution. In light of your recent article in the *Miami Law Journal* regarding international arbitration programs, I decided to write to you to request an informational interview.

Given your expertise and your current nomination as Florida Rising Star in *Super Lawyers*, 2013-2014, I would be interested in tapping into your wealth of knowledge in this field. I would like to hear your perspectives on the positive and negative aspects of the practice area and its future potential, and obtain any insight you may have regarding opportunities within the field. I would appreciate any assistance you could offer in the form of an informational meeting, at your convenience.

As such, I have enclosed my resume for your review. Please feel free to contact me at any time. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Sign Your Name Here

Enclosure (1)

THANK YOU LETTER

Name
Address
Phone number
Email

October 28, 2015

First Name Last Name
Title
Firm/Company
Address

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview with Cran & Berry yesterday. I enjoyed meeting with you and the various members of the firm, and appreciate the courtesy extended to me during my afternoon visit. Per your request, I have enclosed my writing sample, law school transcripts and my list of references.

As we discussed during the interview, I grew up in Caracas, Venezuela where I worked for over 5 years. I have developed many work relationships with domestic and international companies. For that reason, I will have no problems expanding your firm in my home country.

The time I spent at Cran & Berry confirmed my desire to join your firm. I believe that you will find my work and academic experience well suited for your present employment needs. As stated in my original application letter, your firm has an excellent reputation and I would consider it a privilege to work for Cran & Berry upon completion of my LL.M. studies. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need anything else.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane N. Doe

Enclosures (3)

**WITHDRAWAL FROM CONSIDERATION
(after interview but before offer)**

Name
Address
Phone number
Email

November 30, 2015

First Name Last Name
Title
Firm/Company
Address

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview with Cran & Berry.

At this time, I have decided to pursue other opportunities, and thus request that my name be withdrawn from consideration for the associate position.

I enjoyed meeting you and hope to have the pleasure of speaking with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURE]

Joshua Rosenblatt

cc: [Recruiting Coordinator or Hiring Partner—whichever individual was not the addressee]

Revised 7/2015

