



hms | hsdm

office for postdoctoral fellows

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Your Name, PhD/MD
Street Address, City | Town, State ZIP
Phone – Email (personal)

Same header as on resume/CV –
“packages” documents together and looks
more professional (do not take up too
much space)

Date

Their Name (if known)
Company/Institution Name
Street Address
City/Town, State ZIP

Dear Hiring Manager (name if known – do your research!):

First Paragraph: State why you are writing (applying for position), the position title and requisition number, and where you learned of the position (name of website, etc. and if someone referred you). You should convey a sense of enthusiasm about the position, company, or industry – use the opportunity to demonstrate you know something about the company. They want to know what excites you enough about the position to apply. Keep it short, upbeat, and engaging while avoiding clichés.

Second Paragraph: This is where you describe the “big picture you.” For example: “As a postdoctoral research fellow at Harvard Medical School, I have been investigating the effects of X on Y under the direction of *Respected Professor*.” If relevant, work your way backwards to your graduate research including important findings and publications. Include other significant experiences, education, and research as appropriate. The amount of information and what is relevant to include will be determined by the job posting. You need to understand what they are looking for and include information from your training that will directly address their hiring needs. If it is not relevant to the position, leave it out.

Third Paragraph: This is where you address “fit” using concrete examples of your soft skills and related technical expertise. You could also weave this info into the experiences outlined above to tell a whole story. Demonstrate that your skills and personality are suited to the position (e.g., pace of discovery, use of innovative technologies, collaborative research setting, *etc*). Show that you know what a job/career in that field entails. The remainder of this paragraph is used to “skill match” with the job posting – use at least 3 key requirements for the job and demonstrate how your experiences and training fit with what they are seeking. This could include specific leadership experience, research expertise, collaborative approach, techniques, or technologies – the better the “match,” the better your chances of getting a call. **Spend some time and get this paragraph right!**

Fourth Paragraph: Wrap up by conveying a sense of enthusiasm about the position (yes, again!). Offer that you look forward to discussing the position and tell them how to contact you (even if it is at the top of the letter). End with a sincere concluding remark and thank them for their time in reviewing your materials.

Sincerely,
(*Signature*)
Your Name, Degree

Scientist Position - General

Cover Letter Rubric

	3	2	1	Score
	Cover letter invites employers to review your résumé.	Cover letter needs improvement to draw attention to your résumé.	Cover letter causes your résumé to be removed from the pile.	
Research	Cover letter clearly indicates that you reviewed the job description and company website to identify desired qualifications, skills, and abilities for the position. Cover letter has been specifically tailored for the position.	Cover letter mentions qualifications, skills, and abilities that are commonly desired in a given field. Cover letter is appropriate, but not specifically tailored for the position.	Cover letter does not reflect an understanding of the qualifications, skills, and abilities necessary to be successful in the position. It is evident that the applicant did not even read the job description.	
Introductory Paragraph	Introductory paragraph identifies the position for which you are applying and how you learned about the vacancy. If you were referred by a faculty member, relative, or current employee, note his or her name.	Introductory paragraph identifies the position you are applying for. Paragraph does not include an explanation of how you learned about the vacancy.	There is no introductory paragraph OR introductory paragraph indicates interest in the wrong position or in a position in the wrong organization.	
Body Paragraphs (1-2)	Body paragraphs succinctly identify your strongest and most relevant qualifications, skills, and abilities and clearly state how they apply to the position. Keywords from the job description have been incorporated in these paragraphs to demonstrate a strong fit. Paragraphs expand on the experiences in which you developed relevant qualifications, skills, or abilities, providing clear examples that invite the employer to review your résumé. Paragraphs detail your passion for the organization, industry, or job duties.	Body paragraphs identify a few of your strongest qualifications, but do not state how they apply to the position. Paragraphs generally indicate previous work experiences, but do not entice employers to take a closer look at your résumé. There is no evidence of passion for the position or industry.	There are no body paragraphs OR body paragraphs have clearly been copied and pasted from another cover letter. Qualifications described are irrelevant or insubstantial.	
Closing Paragraph	Closing paragraph thanks the employer for their time and consideration. Paragraph reinforces your desire to work for the organization. Paragraph may include a specific time period in which you will follow up to meet and discuss the position. Contact information is provided again for clarity.	Closing paragraph thanks the employer and mentions intention to follow up at a later time. There is little to no evidence of passion to work for the company.	There is no closing paragraph OR closing paragraph does not indicate any future intention to meet and discuss the position or thank the employer.	
Mechanics	Cover letter has no capitalization, spelling, or grammar errors. Applicant has carefully proofread the letter, and sought review from the Career Center to ensure an error-free document.	Cover letter contains a few minor capitalization, spelling, or grammar errors, but a consistent pattern is observed. Cover letter is readable, but "attention to detail" is no longer one of your selling points.	Cover letter has glaring capitalization, spelling, or grammar errors. A persistent pattern of errors is distracting, making the letter difficult to read.	
Formatting	Cover letter has been formatted using the appropriate business letter format. Your contact information, date, and the employer's contact information are located at the top of the letter. The letter has been addressed to a specific person, Human Resources Manager or Search Committee. Your signature is found at the bottom of the letter, along with the word, "Enclosure," which indicates that your résumé and references are included. Margins should be no smaller than a half inch, and font size should be 10-12 point.	Cover letter has been formatted incorrectly. Contact information is missing. The letter has been addressed "To Whom It May Concern." A comma follows the addressee instead of a colon.	Cover letter does not appear to follow any format. One or more paragraphs are missing. The letter has been addressed to an individual in the wrong organization.	
			Total	

Take Home Messages



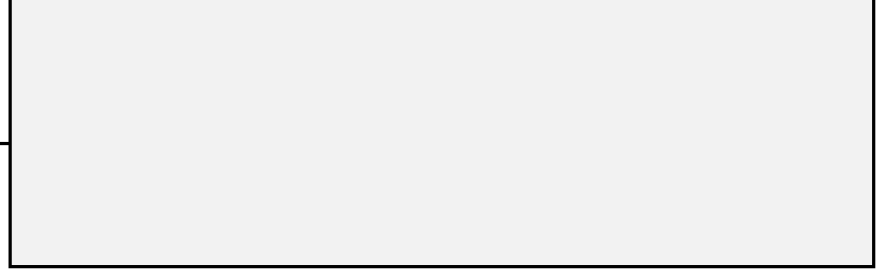
Supporting Details



General Struggles with Topic



Strategies Used/Learned



Unresolved Questions



4 Simple Rules for A Better Academic Cover Letter

1) Follow this structure

Paragraph 1 – State the job, where you saw the posting, and ONE SENTENCE summarizing your qualifications and/or what you'd bring to the job. *It's OK for this paragraph to only be 2 sentences long.*

Paragraphs 2 & 3 – Examples of work you have done that demonstrate your ability to do the work the job will require.

Paragraph 4 – A sentence about the specifics of the institution or individuals that appeal to you or match your experience and a 1-2 sentence summary of what you would bring to the position.

2) Map your letter to the job description

Every detail you include about yourself should be a demonstration of your skills, abilities or experience that directly addresses one of the responsibilities or requirements listed in the job application.

3) DO NOT summarize your CV or tell a chronological story of your career

The cover letter is a persuasive document, not a summary. The search committee will have access to your full CV if they want additional information.

4) Allow (at least) one other person to proofread it

The cover letter is the first work sample you are providing a potential new employer. Typos, poor grammar and other mistakes give the impression you are not capable of a high-quality work product.

M [REDACTED] ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESEARCH CENTER



**[REDACTED] IS
HOSPITAL**



S [REDACTED] Ph.D.
 [REDACTED] Institute for Neurodegenerative Disease
 Ma [REDACTED]
 Building 114-100 [REDACTED]
 Ch [REDACTED]
 Tel: 60 [REDACTED] Fax: 61 [REDACTED]
[https://scholar \[REDACTED\].edu/st \[REDACTED\]](https://scholar [REDACTED].edu/st [REDACTED])



Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to apply for a tenure-track position at the level of Assistant Professor in the Departments of Anatomy & Neurobiology and Biology at Boston University (#15149). I am currently an Instructor of Neurology, at [REDACTED] Hospital, working with Dr. [REDACTED]. I am also a member of the Laboratory of [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] Medical School. My research focuses on understanding how antiviral pathways are regulated in the nervous system and how dysregulation of these pathways leads to neural system loss in neurodegenerative diseases. I am excited about the opportunity to be a part of your innovative department, and to be a part of BU's efforts to understand Neuroimmunology.

The recent failures of experimental drugs in clinical trials for Alzheimer's disease have highlighted the need for a better understanding of disease mechanisms. The same is true for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, Frontotemporal Dementia, and Parkinson's disease, for which there are no disease-modifying therapies.

Neuroinflammation is a likely driver of adult-onset neurodegenerative diseases. However, most studies on neuroinflammation focus on microglia and astrocytes, whereas neurons are not thought to play an active role. I made the unexpected discovery that neurons themselves can initiate a neuroinflammatory antiviral innate immune response that is regulated differently relative to cells outside of the nervous system (in revision for publication at *Science Translational Medicine*). I also found that TBK1, a kinase that is essential for the activation of antiviral signaling in cells outside of the nervous system, instead functions to dampen the antiviral response in neurons – providing mechanistic insights into the question of why mutations in TBK1 specifically affect brain function. My lab will work to functionally understand the poorly understood cellular and molecular mechanisms that regulate neurotoxic antiviral signaling networks in the nervous system and how this toxicity spreads across neural circuits. My lab's work will lay the foundation for understanding cell-intrinsic and propagated neuronal cell death in encephalitis and adult-onset neurodegenerative diseases.

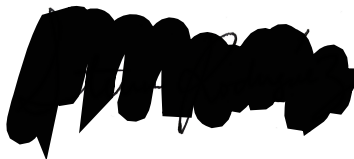
I developed a high-throughput *in vitro* human neural culture assay to study and identify regulators of antiviral signaling and propagation (provisional patent submitted). In collaboration with [REDACTED] at the [REDACTED] Institute, I also successfully developed a pooled CRISPR/Cas9 genome-wide assay to screen for regulators of neurotoxic antiviral signaling in mature neurons. Similar assays have been a challenge for others in our field. These tools help put my lab at the forefront of understanding the mechanisms regulating antiviral signaling in the nervous system.

My work on neuroinflammation and neurodegeneration complements beautiful work by Dr. Jennifer Luebke using electrophysiology to study basic and disease processes, Dr. Jonathan Wisco on imaging diagnostics in Alzheimer's disease, Dr. Jean-Jacques Soghomonian studying Parkinson's disease, Dr. Use Beffert in Alzheimer's disease, Dr. Juan Fuxman Bass studying inflammation, Dr. Angela Ho studying synaptic dysfunction in disease, to name a few. Moreover, my use of the olfactory neural circuit to study the role of innate immune signaling in neurodegenerative disease *in vivo* complements the exciting work of Dr. Ian Davison.

In addition to my research, I have been a strong advocate for underrepresented minority students in the sciences through outreach programs. As an underrepresented minority in the sciences, I understand how critical it is to have strong support. I have also mentored, trained, and taught tens of undergraduate students, graduate students, residents, and technicians in the laboratory and classroom setting. I am excited about the opportunity to use the lessons that I have learned to contribute to the success of students at BU and the broader Boston-area community. I also recently joined the planning Committee for the [REDACTED] Science Symposium, hosted by Dr. J [REDACTED], Professor of Medicine and Dean for Diversity and Community Partnership at [REDACTED] Medical School.

I think my goals align very well with the Departments of Anatomy & Neurobiology and Biology at Boston University, where I will explore basic innate immune response in the nervous system. My research program will help define a new conceptual framework for neuroinflammation in the mammalian brain. My work will also enhance our understanding of neurodegeneration, and lead to the development of novel therapeutics to treat these diseases.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which has been completely redacted with a black box.A redacted name consisting of a single horizontal black bar.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] • [REDACTED] • [REDACTED] • linkedin.com/in/[REDACTED]

November 20, 2019

[REDACTED]
Countway Library [REDACTED]
Harvard Medical School
10 Shattuck St. Boston, MA 02115

Dear Ms. [REDACTED]

I was delighted to discover your posting for an [REDACTED] at the Countway Library of Medicine. As a professional project coordinator with a uniquely diverse background in cultural organizations and extensive event management experience in higher education, I believe this position intersects my interests and qualifications perfectly.

Over the last fourteen years, I have taken on increasingly challenging and complex projects for a range of organizations, and I have fallen in love with the world of project coordination in all its chaotic glory. Creating systems and structures to facilitate the large or open-ended missions of small teams is a particular strength of mine.

As evidenced by my resume, my specialty is event management, and I enjoy all aspects of the process: from inspiration and research to post-event data gathering and analysis. When I sign onto a project, I jump in with both feet and commit myself to exceeding expectations in both customer service and product quality. I have had the opportunity to coordinate all manner of events, from small five-person seminars for the [REDACTED] to large-scale professional conferences with 4,000 attendees for the [REDACTED] Leadership Conference. I find value in all projects that promote diversity and educate or enrich the local community.

I have had the good fortune of working almost exclusively in small teams with big ideas (read: understaffed departments with ambitious visions), and this has granted me the invaluable opportunity to wear many hats at once and acquire a wide range of practical skills. This cumulative knowledge has given me the dexterity and entrepreneurial spirit necessary to tackle any new project that comes my way. For example: the strategic communication techniques I developed as Program Manager for the [REDACTED] Senior Center helped me to attract several heretofore untapped corporate sponsors for the [REDACTED] Center's programs and initiatives. I applied the creative marketing tactics I had honed as Marketing Lead for the [REDACTED] to promote the [REDACTED] Leadership Conference to an entirely new audience, allowing us to successfully expand our programming internationally.

I brought my graphic design skills and aptitude for learning and embracing new software to the [REDACTED] Music Research Institute in order to create a new website, newsletter campaigns and social media presence, which put us on the map in the local arts community. These skills also helped me to create a popular mobile app for the [REDACTED] Leadership Conference and gave me the expertise necessary to completely overhaul our registration process, contributing to a tripled registration rate over seven years and reducing the average check-in time from nearly two minutes to under ten seconds during my tenure.

[Redacted]

[Redacted] • [Redacted] • [Redacted] • [linkedin.com/in/\[Redacted\]](https://www.linkedin.com/in/[Redacted]) • [Redacted]

As a passionate advocate of arts integration, I am genuinely inspired by Countway Library’s Art and Artifact Collection, and I appreciate the way that parts of the collection are sprinkled throughout the library itself, encouraging visitors to engage with the art while they browse. As a gardening enthusiast, I am thrilled that the Library has taken such a thoughtful role in ensuring the Countway Community Garden’s longevity and integration into campus life.

While volunteering with the garden over the past year or so, I have often found myself identifying opportunities to raise engagement levels and help publicize the garden’s events and benefits, and this position would give me a chance to work directly with the garden leadership and help realize some of these ideas in real time. And finally, as an ardent proponent of cross-cultural dialogue, the diversity of programming at the Library speaks directly to my desire to promote communication and the exchange of ideas amongst disparate populations.

My current position as Liaison and Coordinator for the [Redacted] Office for Student Services has positioned me as an ideal candidate for the [Redacted] role by renewing my fast-paced multitasking and prioritizing skills, affording me the opportunity to learn about the Longwood Area community’s rich tapestry of resources and diversity of thought, and the privilege of working directly with the students themselves. This daily interaction with students has given me valuable insight into what they’re looking for, where they find their information, and where their overall priorities lie.

I would bring great enthusiasm, creativity and expertise to this position, and I would be thrilled to speak more about it with you in person. Thank you very much for your consideration, and please feel free to contact me anytime if I can provide any additional information.

Have a wonderful day!

Most sincerely,



[Redacted]