



How to make speculative applications

What is a speculative application?

A speculative application is when you approach a company, with a CV and cover letter, to enquire about work experience opportunities when no position is being formally advertised.

Why make speculative applications?

- Not all job opportunities are advertised therefore it can still be worthwhile getting in touch to ask whether a company could offer a placement or internship.
- Speculative applications are also useful if you want to work for a small organisation or are keen to work in a specific geographical area.
- It shows a company that you really want to work for them (providing your CV and cover letter are not too generic).
- This strategy puts you in control of your job search and you could uncover opportunities that others are not aware of.

What companies should you target?

You can send speculative applications to any company you come across however small and medium-sized companies are least likely to advertise vacancies so it would be most effective to target these.

How to find companies of interest:

- Make use of your own networks: consider who you know (friends, family, tutors) who could put you in touch with someone at a particular organisation.
- Look at where Lancaster University alumni work using [LUMS Connect](#).
- Use [LinkedIn](#) to search for companies based on sector and/or key words.
- Search job sites for companies who are recruiting; they may be advertising for more experienced hires but they may also welcome additional support too.
- Use online business directories, such as [Yell](#), to search for companies of interest.
- Look for [recruitment conferences/fairs](#) and review the list of exhibitors.
- If you are interested in start-up companies look at websites such as [Silicon Milkroundabout](#) and [Angel List](#) or search Google for lists of start-ups in specific sectors or geographical areas.

Research the company:

- Visit their main website, careers pages and blogs.
- Follow them on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.
- Read any company information such as annual reports and reviews.
- Search them on Google news to find out any recent updates.
- For more in-depth guidance please see other guidance sheet '*How to research an employer*'.



Consider what you can offer the company:

- Your aim is to persuade the recipient of your speculative application to contact you.
- What are your main strengths and skills? Link these to the company's requirements.
- What type of work/project can you offer during your placement/internship?
- Do you have any relevant experience (academic /employment/voluntary)?
- When are you available? Be clear about the length of placement or internship you are looking for.

Prepare a targeted CV and covering letter:

- Tailoring your speculative application is vital.
- Use your cover letter to show that you have done your research on the company.
- Specify the department you would like to work and what you would like to gain.
- State the time you are available for and show how you can be of benefit to them.
- Provide evidence of your transferable skills and any relevant experience in your cover letter.
- Make sure your CV highlights the main skills that they are looking for and remove any irrelevant information.
- Make sure your CV profile gains their attention.
- Visit the Careers team to get your documents reviewed before submitting.

Who to send your application to:

- Personally addressed applications look more professional and make more impact compared to documents addressed to 'Dear Sir/Madam'.
- Ideally find someone from the department you want to work in or find the name of someone who works in recruitment or HR.
- Look at staff contact details listed on their website.
- You could call the company to find out who is the best person to contact.
- Look on LinkedIn for details of staff within a particular department.

Risks:

- This process can be time consuming and it may be that your letter goes unanswered or you receive a generalised rejection response.
- Do not harass a company if you do not hear back; sending several identical copies of your application to the same contact at a company will not do you any favours.

Top tips:

- Write to a named contact if possible.
- Put in as much effort as you would for a standard job application.
- Do not send out a hundred identical cover letter and CVs; careful targeting is more likely to be successful so take your time with applications.
- Keep records of the companies you have written to.