

Motivation /cover letter

When applying for a graduate programme at a university, Erasmus exchange programme, or a job, applicants are usually requested to submit a letter of motivation (sometimes also called “statement of purpose” or cover letter). These letters of motivation play an important role in the selection process.

QUESTION: what in your opinion should be included in the motivation letter? What should be left out? Note down your points and check with others.

Now look at the first version of a motivation letter sample and think about its drawbacks and how to improve them:

National University of Ireland, Maynooth, English Department

Letter of motivation: Helena Obermeier

Applicant for September 2014 admission to Erasmus Program

I am applying for the Erasmus exchange program with the UK and Ireland as part of my studies. My name is Helena Obermeier and I am currently studying to become a primary school teacher at the University of Munich. I am interesting in teaching secondary school pupils. However, English is still my major subject.

I have always planned to spend some time abroad during my studies that is why I am using the opportunities given to us by the International Office. I chose the Erasmus program, because I would like to spend a year at an English-speaking university, I think it is a good opportunity. After I have finished my studies, I will still be able to go abroad and teach or work.

The National University of Ireland, Maynooth, is my choice for my stay due to the variety of courses they offer. I have read that they offer an Irish language course. I understand that there is an extra fee for this course, but I think it is useful to learn a new language. I am also interested in the courses Ireland 431-800/ 800-1169, Women in the Celtic World and Introducing Celtic History.

I find the history of Ireland interesting, so the Erasmus program would be a chance to learn more about the culture.

– I hope that I am a suitable candidate for the Erasmus program.

Now compare with the full version - what are the main differences?

National University of Ireland, Maynooth, English Department

Letter of motivation: Helena Obermeier

Applicant for September 2014 admission to Erasmus Program

I am applying for the Erasmus exchange program with the UK and Ireland as part of my studies. My name is Helena Obermeier and I am currently studying to become a primary school teacher at the University of Munich. After completing one year of studies to become a grammar school teacher, I changed my course to primary school education. I realised that my teaching interest lies with primary school children rather than secondary school pupils. However, English is still my major subject.

As I have always planned to spend some time abroad during my studies, I am very happy to use the opportunities given to us by the International Office. I chose the Erasmus program, because I am particularly interested in spending a year at an English-speaking university. I think this is a unique opportunity to combine my university studies with first-hand experience of life in an English speaking country. In my opinion living on campus at another university in a foreign country is an extraordinary opportunity which can only be experienced during the time of my studies. After I have finished my studies, I will still be able to go abroad and teach or work, but I will not be able or allowed to study at another university anymore.

The National University of Ireland, Maynooth, is my first choice for my stay due to the variety of courses they offer. On the National University of Ireland's website I have read that they even offer an Irish language course. I understand that there is an extra fee for this course, but I am very eager to learn this new language. In addition I am very interested in the courses Ireland 431-800/ 800-1169, Women in the Celtic World and Introducing Celtic History.

I have always been fascinated by the culture and history of Ireland. Unfortunately, I have not had an opportunity to visit Ireland yet. The Erasmus program would be a unique chance to fulfil this ambition and experience life in Ireland and learn more about the culture through first-hand experience and university courses.

– I am confident that I am a strong candidate for the Erasmus program.

Write your own motivation letter.

Adapted from:

http://www.hse.ru/data/2014/03/18/1332548147/motivationletter_checklist.pdfhttp://www.jobline.uni-muenchen.de/samples/letters_of_motivation/letter_of_motivation_erasmus.pdf