



**Professional Communication for
Computer and Electrical Engineering
LSP127**

Course Compendium

CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
Division for Language and Communication
2018

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1. Overview of compulsory assignments

Below you will find an overview of the compulsory assignments on the course. Please observe that additional information, details and guidelines will be given in class and/or in the teaching materials when each assignment is introduced. All assignments are assessed as either pass (G) or fail (U), and all assignments must be completed and graded pass (G) for a course grade pass (G). The assessment criteria are available in a separate document on PingPong.

The following assignments are outlined below:

- Project Brief
- CV
- Peer response activities
- Oral presentation
- Abstract

Project Brief

This assignment consists of writing a Project Brief in two steps, and participating in a peer response activity based on the first draft of the text.

Dates: First draft prepared and peer response activity: 29 January, in class.
Final draft uploaded on PingPong: 2 February, 23:59.

Assignment objectives and learning outcomes:

- to be able to plan a project in an effective way and communicate the plan in speech and writing.
- to practise giving and receiving constructive feedback.

In your thesis project group, write a draft of a project brief for the project you are doing/will be doing for your thesis project. You can find detailed guidelines about the contents and organization of the project brief text in this course compendium, p.7.

You should bring your text draft in 2 separate paper copies to the workshop in class on 29 January. Be prepared to give a short presentation to another project group and to discuss your text with them. After this you will continue working on the text and submit a final version to PingPong by 2 February.

The final version of the text should be approx. 1 -2 A4-page long using 1.5 spacing. Use section headings as advised in this course compendium, p.7. Upload 1 text per project group.

CV

Write a CV targeted to either a job advertisement of your own choice (in which case you should enclose a copy of the ad with your text) or to the job ad in the compendium (p. 8, Design Engineer Consultants). **N.B.** this is an individual assignment.

As part of your pre-writing activities, read the guidelines in the compendium (pp. 11-14) and in the PowerPoint-slides. Write a CV (draft) and bring 3 paper copies to class on 29 January for the peer response activity.

Dates: First draft prepared and peer response activity: 29 January, in class.
Final draft uploaded on PingPong: 9 February, 23:59.

Peer Response Activities

One of the cornerstones of process writing, collaborative learning and communication development is the activity called ‘peer response’. Briefly, peer response means that we read someone else’s text, or listen to a presentation, and give feedback on that item. Peer response is thus a great opportunity for the writer to discuss a text/a presentation, to learn how someone else interprets the text/the presentation, and get valuable help to develop the text. Peer response is also beneficial for the responder since he/she can learn revisions skills that can be used in his/her own communication.

As outlined above, you will discuss the project brief draft and the CV draft in a peer response session on 29 January. This means that you need to bring the texts in three or four paper copies to hand out.

You will also provide feedback to one or more classmates on their Powerpoint slides for the oral presentation at the end of the course. The goal here is the same as the goal with the project brief/CV peer workshop: to strengthen your classmates’ work prior to the final due date. For information on presentation slides, see pp. 25-26 of this compendium.

Learning objectives:

- give and receive constructive feedback for oral and written contexts
- develop revision skills

Oral Presentation

The learning outcomes of the course include the ability to adapt and prepare information for oral communication contexts. Therefore, one of the assignments is to give an oral presentation in English related to your thesis project work. The focus of the presentation will vary depending on how far into the project you are.

Students will give the presentations on 1 March or 8 March (the schedule will be made after our course is under way, and at least one week prior to the presentation dates). In your presentation, you may choose to present an overview of your thesis work so far or to focus on a specific part, an aspect that is particularly interesting or difficult, one which your peer students on the course would be interested in hearing about. Often, there is likely to be a problem-solution-evaluation focus in these presentations. So, think of a focus for your presentation as soon as is possible and begin to prepare in your project group. See the compendium pp. 23-24 and the lesson material for presentation guidelines.

Dates: 1 or 8 March

Length of presentation: 8-10 minutes

Abstract Analysis

The abstract analysis should be 200 words long, +/- 10%, and will also be completed in your project group.

The work should be done before class on 14 February so that you can bring a draft of the abstract analysis to class for the workshop. If you finish the analysis during the workshop and have it assessed (Pass) by your teacher, you do not have to upload it. You can find information on abstract writing in this compendium, pp. 21-22.

The task is to analyse and write a short comment on an abstract. There are two options here, so you should **do either a) or b) below**.

- a) Choose an abstract from an academic or scientific article, and analyse it.
- b) Analyse the abstract below (from the report called *Wireless Transmission of HDMI signals*).

Date: If you do not attend the workshop or if you do not complete the assignment there, upload your completed text on PingPong by 16 February, 23:59.

Procedure

1. Label the purpose / scope / method / results / conclusion in the abstract.
2. Discuss the balance between the above parts of the abstract. Which section or sections receive the most attention in the abstract? Why do you think this is so?
3. Does the abstract work on its own, i.e. does it give you a clear picture of the report? If so, how does it do this, and if not, why not?

(Choice b) Wireless Transmission of HDMI signals

A growing trend of physical separation of digital content and human interfaces is driving the demand for wireless solutions for streaming high bit rate data from one unit to another. This gives the end user freedom of placing equipment wherever wanted without any thought of problems with cables. The goal is to serialize and later deserialize HDMI signals to enable it to be sent over a radio link. A Xilinx Spartan-6 LTX is used as a hardware platform. To limit the scope of the project it was decided that communication would only go one way. This prevents the negotiation between the HDMI source and monitor from taking place. The negotiation has to be implemented on the hardware platform. A system design for serialization and sending of the serialized HDMI data was successfully created. Most of the different parts of the system have been verified to work individually, but not together. A fully working prototype is not far away.

Nyckelord: HDMI, wireless, FPGA, Radio

Jacob, R., Eriksson, S. och Larsson, M. (2013) *Wireless Transmission of HDMI signals*. Göteborg : Chalmers University of Technology

2. Business Writing

How is business writing different from academic writing, i.e. the assignments that you do at Chalmers? Four main differences can be noted:

1. Writing tasks
2. Audience
3. Style
4. Goals of writing

Writing tasks

If you were to list the types of writing that you do at Chalmers, you might come up with, for example, different types of reports and note taking. In a business situation, however, although you would still be writing reports, there would be other kinds of writing that would be part of your everyday working life such as letters, e-mails and memos. This means that you would have to be familiar with different layouts and conventions. For example, whereas you might not use bullet points in a letter of application, it would be a good idea in a memo where you want to make your point as briefly and clearly as possible. The way you write is very much affected by your audience.

Audience

At Chalmers, it is mainly your tutors and perhaps your fellow students who read your written work. In a business situation, your audience is going to be much more varied. It could be your boss, your colleagues, a contact in another company or even the general public. Therefore, the way you write and the information you include will be different for every piece of writing. For example, the language used in an e-mail to a colleague is going to be very different to the first e-mail you send to a superior in another country. You might start the former with “Hi!” and the latter with “Dear Mr Brown”. Also, because your audience is broader, the writing itself becomes even more important. Whereas at Chalmers, a poor piece of writing might give you a low grade, in business your writing will not only give an impression of you but of the company as well. Therefore, if you submit a poor piece of writing, it could affect many other people and perhaps even your job prospects. One way to make a good impression is to be aware of the importance of choosing the right style.

Style

Once you know who your reader is and what your content will be, you need to decide what sort of style you will be writing in. Generally, for any kind of business document, your language will be fairly formal. The table on p.6 outlines what this means in practice. However, the table is only a guideline.

If you look at **connecting words** for example, you will see that “moreover” is more formal than “and”. That is not to say though, that “and” cannot be used as a linking word in a formal document. It would make writing quite difficult if that were the case. However, it would be strange to start a sentence with “and” in a formal document whereas this would be quite acceptable if you were writing to a friend. The same would apply to words like “but” and “so”. Similarly, it is possible to use **personal pronouns** like “we” or “they” in some formal documents (though it is more unlikely you will use “you” or “I”) especially if you want to make it clear who did the action or want to avoid repeating the passive voice.

It is also not necessary to try to find **long abstract nouns** to replace verbs in formal writing as long as the sentence is fairly formal anyway. For example, instead of saying:

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a comparison was done between two metals to ascertain the relative densities
you could say:

Two metals were compared to ascertain the relative densities
and save yourself a few words! Finally not all sentences in a formal document need to be long, complex ones - often a sentence which is short and to the point can work more effectively.

Goals of Writing

Before you even put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard), you need to know why you are writing this particular document. At Chalmers, it will probably be because it is part of the course you are doing and your goal will be to get a good grade for the writing (or at least pass). In business, you might be trying to explain a concept, sell a product or make a request. Whatever the goal of that particular writing is, it needs to be absolutely clear from the very first sentence of the document. The cliché in business is that time is money; therefore you want to waste as little of it as possible. That means that if you are writing to complain, the reader should know this from the first sentence of your letter. If you are writing a report to explain a particular process or product, then the reader needs to be aware from the first page what the report will do and what it will contain. The only possible exception to this is the 'bad news letter' (for example, a letter to inform someone that he or she was not accepted on a study program), where the writer will want to prepare the reader for what is coming.

Table 1: Differences between formal and informal English. Those marked with a * are commented on above.

MORE FORMAL	MORE INFORMAL
SINGLE WORD VERBS – LONG VERBS (OFTEN WITH LATIN ORIGIN) Participate Receive Calculate Organise Become angry Improve	PHRASAL VERBS / GET Take part in Get Work out Get in order Get angry Get better
INTENSIFIERS Extremely, very e.g. I was extremely angry	INTENSIFIERS Really, sure e.g. I was really angry, I sure was angry (AmE)
FORMAL CONNECTING WORDS* Moreover, furthermore, in addition to Subsequently Therefore	INFORMAL CONNECTING WORDS And, also Next, then So
IMPERSONAL CONSTRUCTIONS* It is said that...	ACTIVE CONSTRUCTIONS They say that...
ABSTRACT NOUNS* Is happiness possible during unemployment? After clarification of the problem areas...	MODAL VERBS, ADJECTIVES, CLAUSES, ETC. Can people be happy when they haven't got a job? After the bits that everyone was getting wrong had been explained....
COMPLEX SENTENCES* After placing the chemical in the fluid, it should be left for a short period.	SIMPLE SENTENCES Place the chemical in the fluid. Leave it for a short period.
NO CONTRACTIONS I will, I would like	CONTRACTIONS I'll, I'd like
INDIRECT QUESTIONS I wonder if you could tell me the costs... The question of why this is relevant can be answered.....	DIRECT QUESTIONS How much is it? Why is this a relevant question today?
NO COLLOQUIALISMS / SLANG As you might be aware, there are a number of poor children in that area.	COLLOQUIALISMS / SLANG You know, there are lots of poor kids in that area.
PRECISE TERMS e.g. what kind of tool	VAGUE COLLECTIVE TERMS e.g. the thing
SOME PUNCTUATION : ; e.g. The reasons for this include the following : the position.....	SOME PUNCTUATION ! ? e.g. I couldn't believe it!

3. Writing the Project Brief

1. What is a project brief?

A project brief is meant to give an overview of your project. More specifically, it should describe:

- the background and aim of the project (NB! not a course aim),
- what problems you are likely to encounter and what solutions/outcomes can be expected,
- how the project is organized.

However, the contents of a brief will also vary according to how far into a project you are. In the context of this course, this means that the project brief will describe work in progress in the initial stage.

N.B. A project brief is much shorter than a planning report although the content is very similar. A project brief fulfills the purposes and credit-size of this course more appropriately.

2. The sections of the project brief and the writing process:

We would like you to use the following headings: *Background and Aim*, *Anticipated Outcome* and *Organisation*. Below follow some guidelines about what information should be included in the three sections.

Background and Aim:

The first section gives the background to your project, and presents the topic and the aim of the project. In addition to presenting the problem/task you will focus on, you should also explain why/how the project is relevant – place the topic in a wider context and typically relate scientific principles to real world situations. In short, it describes why your project needs to be carried out and then articulates the aim of your project. You should focus on the project as such and not present course and/or learning objectives.

Note that although the project brief should keep a broad perspective, it is a good strategy to include enough information to ensure that your project looks interesting and necessary. You may find it useful to think of the background and aim section as describing a situation that involves a problem that needs to be solved.

Anticipated Outcome

In this section you describe the solution/outcome that you think you will reach. An effective organisation of this section is to use a Problem-Solution structure. That is, you start the section by restating the main issue that you will focus on, and then describe what problems you are likely to encounter and offer plausible solutions to them.

Organisation:

The organisation section defines who will work on the project, their roles and what needs to be done. In other words, state:

- who you are;
- what material you may need to carry out the project;
- what (background) reading you need to do;
- how you will divide up the work in the group;
- what your time frame and deadlines are.

4. Job Advertisement

Design Engineer Consultants

DEC is an international consultancy firm involved in collaborative engineering projects. Integrity, dependability and innovation are the driving forces that have kept DEC at the cutting edge of research and development within various fields of engineering. DEC is a young and internationally focused company offering a dynamic and creative working environment. Qualified individuals are invited to apply for positions within the following areas:

Wireless Networking Software Development
Environmental Systems
Computer Integrated Manufacturing Design
Circuit Analysis and Development

Qualifications required

- University degree in Engineering
- Good knowledge of data and communication systems
- Ability to offer creative design solutions
- Ability to advise on innovation initiatives
- Good communication skills including fluent written and spoken English

Role/Responsibilities

You will be part of a team involved in designing services in a variety of project types, from preliminary scheme outline stage through to the preparation of detailed calculations and design, to project handover. You will be expected to establish the design concepts with the team and produce concept/feasibility reports.

If you are interested in applying for this post, please send your application to:

Mike MacLure
107 High Street
Birmingham
BL2 5LJ England
e-mail: decvacancies@dec.com

5. Applying for a Job

Generally when you apply for a job, you need to send in your CV (British English) or resumé (American English) and a cover letter. The only exception to this is if the job advertisement specifies that they want different or extra information, for example if the company has its own application form that they want you to fill in. Your CV provides the employer with relevant information about you and your experience and the cover letter connects you to the job, emphasizing important points from your CV and connecting to key words in the application.

The Building Blocks of a Curriculum Vitae (CV)

1. The Header

- Name - Use your full name and underline the name that you use if it is your middle one.
- E-mail address
- Always include your phone numbers (home, mobile) and make it clear which is which.
- Photo – some people think this makes a personal impression but be careful which photo you use! Note that photos are unusual in an American context.

2. Education

- List the full name of the institution where you are currently studying.
- Include courses that are relevant to the job that you are applying for. Use a specific heading, if possible, such as ‘Relevant courses.’
- Also, under a heading like ‘Special Projects,’ you can highlight unique aspects of your education that are particularly relevant. This is the place to mention reports you may have written, conferences attended, etc. Only give the most important details of these experiences.
- Mention degree(s) and graduation date(s) by month and year. Since you are university students, you can omit lower level education institutions.
- You can list your grade point average if you like. If you have had an outstanding academic record, this is the place to indicate that. However, there is no obligation to provide scholastic standing information. If you decide to provide an indication of your grades, first provide your overall standing, then the highest possible mark at the school (i.e. 4.5 / 5).
- Arrange information in this section so that the items that you want emphasized are first i.e. **in reverse chronological order.**

3. Work Experience

- List your job title, the business where you worked and the time you were there. Rule of thumb for dates: if you worked there for less than 9 months, indicate the specific months you worked, if you worked for more than 9 months, you need only indicate the year you worked.
- In this section, you should include volunteer work, part-time employment, and co-operative placements / internships.
- You should mention the key duties you performed in these positions, and list the relevant skills you acquired there. Remember that your goal is to show employers how your previous work has prepared you for the job that you want, so highlight the relevant information. For example, working at a fast-food restaurant might not seem related to a career in programming, but both rely on managing time effectively and providing excellent customer

service. Therefore, those are the duties that should be emphasized rather than including details about making burgers or cleaning equipment.

- Include any form of special recognition you received (i.e. Employee of the Month).
- Use **action verbs** to describe your duties.

4. Skills

- Not all CVs have a ‘Skills and Abilities’ section, but having one is a useful way of highlighting qualifications that you have that will be of interest to an employer.
- This can be an especially useful section for students since the skills possessed are not necessarily reflected in job experiences.
- This is an excellent place to indicate computer literacy, and language fluency.
- This is a real opportunity to tailor your CV to your employers’ needs.
- You can either list skills using a short bulleted list, or you can organize your skills around two or three headings (i.e. Communication, Programming).

5. Personal Interests and Activities

- This is the place to indicate your extra-curricular and personal interests that will be relevant to an employer.
- Include university activities, and positions you’ve held. Similar to job experiences, list a few of the key duties you completed in these areas. Also, briefly explain what these various organizations are since your employer will probably not be familiar with them.

6. References

- References are normally “available upon request.”
- Have a separate Reference Sheet that lists the names of your references, their titles, their addresses, and telephone numbers. In a few brief sentences, describe your connection with each individual. This list can be mailed to the employer if requested.

6. CV Writing Style Guide

1. Avoid the first person pronoun

Instead of: *I demonstrated professionalism, tact, and diplomacy while I worked with the student council.*

Write: *Demonstrated professionalism, tact, and diplomacy while working with the student council.*

- Beginning most sentences with verbs is standard practice for CVs.

2. Keep sentences short

Instead of: *Spent three years working on major accounts, as lead generator, demonstrating proven skill in organizing and managing a territory with efficiency as well as in developing customer databases.*

Write: *Spent three years working on major accounts. Generated leads and closed sales. Demonstrated proven skill in organization, managing a territory, and developing customer databases.*

- CVs **do not** usually use complete sentences.

3. Use plain English

- Keep language simple
- Avoid excessive use of adjectives
- Use verbs instead of long nouns

4. Use bullet statements when appropriate

- Bulleted information is readable and tends to stand out to the reader
- Information also takes up more room when bulleted - a bonus for many first time applicants
- Keep the bulleted items brief and attempt to have parallel sentence structure with each bullet

5. Go from the general to the specific

- Instead of: *Supervised the training of seven toy-making elves. Responsible for all toy making and customer-related activities in Santa's workshop. Answered customer complaints during peak season.*

Write: *Responsible for all toy-making and customer-related activities in Santa's workshop. Supervised training of seven toy-making elves. Answered customer complaints during peak season.*

- Sequence information in a section by beginning with a general statement and following it with more specific detail

6. Font and layout

- Your CV should make an instant impression – choose a font that is less common, i.e. avoid Times New Roman. However, make sure to choose a font that will be easily readable, since prospective employers will not want to struggle to read your CV.
- Work with the white space in your CV.

7. Action verb list for CV writing

Communication	Shaped	Initiated	Research/ Investigation	Teaching
Aided	Synthesized	Managed	Calculated	Adapted
Addressed	Visualized	Oversaw	Cataloged	Advised
Advised	Wrote	Produced	Clarified	Clarified
Arbitrated		Recommended	Collected	Coached
Arranged	Detail	Reviewed	Computed	Developed
Clarified	Analyzed	Supervised	Conducted	Encouraged
Co-authored	Approved		Correlated	Evaluated
Collaborated	Arranged	Manual skills	Critiqued	Informed
Consulted	Classified	Arranged	Diagnosed	Inspired
Convinced	Collated	Assembled	Discovered	Motivated
Coordinated	Compared	Bound	Examined	Participated
Counseled	Compiled	Built	Experimented	Process
Defined	Documented	Checked	Extracted	Provided
Enlisted	Enforced	Classified	Extrapolated	Represented
Formulated	Followed through	Constructed	Evaluated	Supported
Influenced	Met deadlines	Controlled	Gathered	Taught
Informed	Prepared	Cut	Identified	Trained
Inspired	Processed	Designed	Inspected	Verified
Interpreted	Recorded	Developed	Interviewed	Technical
Interviewed	Retrieved	Drove	Investigated	Analyzed
Mediated	Set priorities	Handled	Monitored	Assembled
Merged	Systemized	Installed	Organized	Built
Negotiated	Tabulated	Invented	Proved	Calculated
Promoted		Maintained	Reviewed	Computed
Publicized	Financial	Monitored	Summarized	Designed
Recommended	Administered	Operated	Surveyed	Developed
Represented	Allocated	Prepared	Systematized	Devised
Resolved	Analyzed	Repaired	Tested	Drafted
Suggested	Appraised			Engineered
	Audited	Organizing		Fabricated
Creative	Budgeted	Achieved	Service	Maintained
Abstracted	Calculated	Assigned	Advised	Modeled
Acted	Computed	Consulted	Attended	Operated
Adapted	Developed	Contracted	Cared	Programmed
Composed	Evaluated	Controlled	Coached	Remodeled
Conceptualized	Figured	Coordinated	Coordinated	Repaired
Created	Maintained	Decided	Counseled	Solved
Designed	Managed	Delegated	Delivered	Upgraded
Developed	Performed	Developed	Demonstrated	Other
Directed	Planned	Established	Explained	Accomplished
Drew	Projected	Evaluated	Furnished	Achieved
Fashioned		Negotiated	Generated	Apply
Generated	Leadership	Organized	Inspected	Contribute
Illustrated	Administered	Planned	Installed	Expanded
Imagined	Chaired	Prepared	Issued	Improved
Improvised	Convinced	Prioritized	Mentored	Liaise
Integrated	Directed	Produced	Provided	Pioneered
Innovated	Examined	Recommended	Purchased	Reduced (losses)
Painted	Executed	Reported	Referred	Resolved
Performed	Expanded		Repaired	(problems)
Planned	Facilitated		Submitted	Spearheaded
Problem solved	Improved			Transformed

Example CV 1

Karl Svensson

Rannebergsvägen X Tel. no. 031-11 11 11
41712 Göteborg Mobile phone: 0705-XX XX XX
SWEDEN karl@svensson.org

Education Chalmers University of Technology *Aug 1999 – May 2002*
Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering
Areas of study:

- *Computer related:* Computer Technology, Programming in Delphi.
- *Surface technology:* Surface and colloid chemistry. Industrial chemistry: system and plant technology, electricity-, measurement- and steering technology, chemical engineering, thermodynamics, theory of flows, heat- and energy technology.
- *Ecotoxicology:* Chemical Environmental Science.

University of Gothenburg *Aug 1998 – May 1999*
Areas of study: Mathematics and chemistry.

Mullsjö Folkhögskola *Aug 1997 – May 1998*
Areas of study: Photography, ceramics, drawing, textile, art history.

Experience Gislaved Folie AB *June - Aug 2000, 2001*

- Worked with substituting old lead-containing plastics with newer and better ones.
- Learned to take responsibility.

Tourist guide, Gnosjö town *June – Aug 1999*

- Worked at a tourist office, and as guide at a museum (English and German).
- Developed guiding skills and leadership

Cleaner, Gullbrannagården *summers 1995 – 1998*

- Main duties: to keep the camp tidy.

Skills Languages

- Swedish (mother tongue)
- English (fluent)
- German (fluent)

Computers

- Languages: HTML, Basic, and Delphi.
- Very good at Windows and UNIX, some experience of MacOS.
- Worked with Word, Excel, Adobe Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro, Gnu Image Manipulation Program (GIMP), Pagemaker.
- Hardware experience.

Interests and Committee member of an photography association at Chalmers.
May 2000 – May 2002.

Activities Sung in Chalmers choir Aug 1998 – May 2000. Before that in different choirs for 11 years.
Have done Kyokushinkarate since August 2000.

References Available on request

Example CV 2



FIRSTNAME LASTNAME

Computer Engineer Student

My goal is to find a stimulating workplace where I can develop and contribute for a mutually beneficial relationship.

Address

123 Teknikgatan
Göteborg 22 333

Telephone

+46 077 777 77 77

Mail

programmer
@gmail.com

Languages

Swedish ★★★★★
English ★★★★★

OS Familiarity

Windows ★★★★★
GNU/Linux ★★★★★
MacOS ★★★★★

Programming



Personal Skills

Problem Solving
Team Player
Organized
Flexible
Curios

Experience

2007 -
2010

Electronics Assembler

Assembled electronics for SAAB EDS.

Speed Competens

Education

2015 -
Ongoing

Bachelor's Degree in Computer Engineering Chalmers University of Technology
Ongoing studies.

2011 -
2015

Bachelor Courses and Thesis

Studied courses towards a bachelor in biotechnology, with a Bachelors thesis in mathematics before switching program.

Chalmers University of Technology

Certifications

Certificate of Course Completion

CCNA Routing and Switching: Introduction to Networks

Cisco Networking Academy

Swedish Drivers License

Other Info

2012 -
2013

Intize

Non-profit work as maths mentor for High School students.

2013

Event Manager for Free City Festival

Helped organize a free festival in Borås city.

2016

H-sektionens Datorförening

PR Manager for a committee at Chalmers.

2016 -

Level Up

Accountant for a start up charity.

References

References available on request.

February 8, 2017

8. Some hints on writing cover letters

The most important documents concerning a job application are the CV and the cover letter. While the CV is an exhaustive list of your qualifications, education, work experience and skills, the cover letter includes only the most important information of relevance for a specific position.

There are several reasons why you should write a cover letter:

- It provides an opportunity to introduce yourself
- It highlights your most relevant qualifications, skills and experience
- It should create an interest in reading your entire CV
- It is an opportunity to ask for an interview

The cover letter is a business letter and should be written with attention to style, layout, grammar, spelling and courtesy. The cover letter should be brief and to the point and not more than one page long. If possible, it should be addressed to the person in charge of the recruitment process. If the advertisement does not indicate a particular name, try phoning the company to find out.

The first paragraph should include a reference to an advertisement, where and when it was published, why you are interested in working for the company, and why you are qualified for the job.

The body of the cover letter (1-3 paragraphs) should give more information about your background and qualifications. Select a few relevant items from your CV and refer the reader to the CV for more detailed information. The cover letter should complement the CV, not repeat it. Focus on the job description. Avoid discussing hobbies and leisure activities unless they are relevant for the position. Extra-curricular activities might show how you made the most of your time at the university. Focus on what you think the employer will want to hear.

In the closing paragraph you should ask for a meeting or an interview. You should thank the reader for taking his/her time to read your application. Make sure that you have listed telephone numbers and addresses where you can be reached.

- ✓ Be brief and to the point
- ✓ Pay attention to style
- ✓ Proof-read for grammar and spelling mistakes
- ✓ Ask someone else to proof-read your cover letter and CV
- ✓ Read your letter from the employer's point of view
- ✓ Don't forget to sign your letter

Remember – you never have more than one chance of creating a first impression.

Example layout of a cover letter

Return Address:

Your name

Address

Address

The Date Application Package was Sent:

(i.e.): January 17 2007

Name and Address of the Recipient:

Person's full name

Their job title

The department they work in

Name of the company

Address

Salutation:

Dear (Mr. or Ms.) _____

The First Paragraph:

The opening paragraph should announce the purpose of your correspondence and the specific job being sought. Mention the ad to which you are responding (it is important to be specific here).

The Middle Paragraphs:

- Highlight one or two of your best accomplishments.
- Call attention to the specific items that qualify you for this position.
- Inform the employer that you meet the minimum requirements for the position (i.e. if the advertisement says that applicants must have a certain level of education, be sure to indicate that you possess this degree/certificate).
- Show in more detail how your qualifications and experience correspond to what the employer wants in this particular job, i.e. what skills do you have that can benefit the employer.
- State why you see this position as a good opportunity for you.
- Remain brief and focused.

The Final Paragraph:

Here, in your closing words, you should thank the employer for reading your application, and you should express interest in meeting the employer for an interview.

Salutation:

Yours sincerely

Your signature

Your name (in type) should appear beneath your signature

9. *Business Letters*

Business letters represent a common and highly influential form of business communication. Even though e-mailing has become the main form of communication, there are still cases in which a letter is often preferred, for example when formalising an agreement. Although many modern corporations will have their own individual formats (also known as ‘boilers’), most will expect that a new employee will have a working knowledge of letter structures and conventions. With a strong understanding of how business letters convey information, employees can effectively manipulate format and strategies to respond to just about any situation.

There are certain expectations built into business communication and nowhere is that more apparent than in the business letter. There are conventions that readers will expect you, as a writer, to follow. For instance, although letters have traditionally indented the sender’s address and the date, this convention is falling out of practice. Most corporations are now working with the more modern block format where all information is aligned at the left margin of the page.

Business letters should be single spaced, and left margin justified. The letter should be centred vertically on the page (if it is only a single page in length), and should have a 2.5 cm margin on both the left and right side of the page. If your letter exceeds one page in length, do not centre the letter vertically. The following format guide discusses the letter line by line.

It should be noted that you need to be highly aware of the tone that you are using in your communication. Business letters tend towards a formal tone. The writer must always be polite and convey respect. The underlying purpose of most business letters is to establish, or re-establish, a professional relationship. The way in which you present yourself is, therefore, of the utmost importance.

Follow the ABC of business letter writing for success:

Accurate	Check facts carefully Include all relevant details Proof-read thoroughly
Brief	Keep sentences short Use simple expressions Use non-technical language
Clear	Use plain, simple English Write in an easy, natural style Avoid over formality or familiarity

Example layout of a business letter

Sender's full name
Sender's full title
Name of Sender Corporation
Address
(often companies have their own
headed notepaper)

Date : day, month (written out followed by a comma), year

Recipient's full name (sometimes preceded by a title: Mr,
or Ms, or Dr, etc.)
Recipient's full job title
Name of Recipient Corporation
Address

(Sometimes a subject line will be written here)

Salutation – *Dear (title, last name, optional comma)-if you don't have a name then use Dear Sir/ Madam**

The first paragraph of your letter should state your reason for writing and your connection with the recipient if one exists. Since time is usually short in any place of business, keep your sentences brief and to the point.

In the middle paragraphs you should describe what it is that you want to achieve with this communication. If there is a need to provide a brief description of any background information, it should be included here; however, only the relevant points should be addressed.

Your letter should end with a paragraph outlining very specific action for the reader. If you want them to call you or to expect your call, to have information ready by a specific date, or any other form of action, you must specify it here.

Close – *If you have started your letter with "Dear Sir/Madam" then end it with "Yours faithfully". If you have used a name then end with "Yours sincerely". If you want to be slightly more informal you can use "Regards"*(always place the closing two lines below the final line of the last paragraph, and end with a comma)

(Leave three or four lines for your signature. Always sign in ink, blue if possible.)

Sender's full name
Sender's full title

Enclosures (This states that there is additional information included with the letter. You can list the enclosures, but simply writing 'Enclosures' is also sufficient)

**If you don't know if the person to whom you are sending your letter is a man or a woman, use their full name and omit the title (ie. Dear Mickey Mouse)*

Example letter

First Engineering
Rochester House
62 Port Glasgow Road
Glasgow G4 OHG

Tel: 0181 556 5981
Fax: 0181 336 9874

19 January, 2008

John Rawling
Railtrack PLC
Railtrack House
Euston Square
London
NW1 2EE

**Structures Examination Contract 2007/2013
Scotland & North West Zones**

Dear Mr Rawling

We are pleased to enclose our submissions in respect of the above zones and confirm that the respective submissions will be hand delivered to the subject zones in accordance with your requirements.

Please be aware of the following:

- Tax will be applied at the appropriate rate
- We should be pleased to consider a discount if both zones are accepted.

Due to time constraints this submission has still to be cleared at the appropriate level. Whilst this is not thought to be a problem, we must reserve our position until our quality procedures have been fully completed.

We trust our submission will be of interest and look forward to detailed discussions should you require.

Yours sincerely

Bob Smith
Commercial Director

10. E-mails

TO: Recipient's full name, full title
FROM: Sender's full name, full title
SUBJECT: Subject addressed in the e-mail - information on this line should be brief but specific (i.e. 'Status Report' is too general but 'Status Report on Books in Production' is sufficient)
CC or BCC: Think! Who needs this information and do you want everyone involved to know who has it (CC) or should this information remain private (BCC)

E-mails are more informal than letters but some kind of greeting is common (but not necessary for informal e-mails). Choose between "Dear XX" or "Hi!" depending on formality.

The body of the e-mail should be made up of short and focused paragraphs. Begin the first paragraph by stating the purpose of the e-mail and by listing your recommendations (if applicable). If the e-mail is in response to a request, refer to that request and its date immediately. Often the introductory paragraph is only one sentence in length.

The second paragraph should be a brief history of the problem addressed in the e-mail, or a summary of the discussion to which the e-mail refers. Since time is a scarce commodity in most businesses, an e-mail must get to the point quickly and offer only the background information that is necessary. Only the points that are relevant to the reader should be included.

Next is the discussion of your purpose and/or your recommendations (if appropriate). This is the place to articulate your rationale for a decision, to cite relevant regulations, to offer alternatives to a specific situation, etc..

Finally, end the e-mail by explicitly stating what you want the reader to do: make a decision, expect a confirming phone call, authorize a payment, and so forth. Remember that business communication must always be polite and measured in tone. E-mails to people with whom you have worked closely for several years may be appropriately friendly, but business communication in general tends to be formal.

"(Kind/ Best) Regards" is often used to sign off.

11. Writing Informative Abstracts

An informative abstract is a stand-alone document in a brief, non-repetitive form that states the purpose, scope, methods, results, and conclusions of a report (or similar document).

Apart from informative abstracts, there are also indicative abstracts excluding results and conclusions, containing only purpose, scope and method. These abstracts are found with projects that are not yet finished, for instance in conference proposals.

The abstract is one of the most important parts of a report, giving an overview of the main features. Readers who are searching for specific information have to be very selective. One way for readers to single out relevant studies and technical reports is to concentrate on the abstracts of the texts.

Reading an abstract a reader will be able to find out whether reading the entire report will be worthwhile. So, barring the title, the abstract is a writer's only opportunity to make sure that readers go on to read the entire text. This places strict requirements on your abstract.

What is required of an abstract?

Whereas the report itself can be written for a fairly specific group of readers, the abstract has to make sense to a larger group of readers. *The abstract has a larger and more varied audience than the report itself.*

The abstract has to be easy to read:

- ✓ Use short sentences but vary sentence structure.
- ✓ Choose active sentence structure where possible.
- ✓ Avoid jargon, nomenclature, and heavy terminology.

Organise the abstract in a way that is predictable to the reader. Most readers expect the following structure:

- ✓ Thesis and purpose ▲ findings ▲ conclusions ▲ discussion and support.
- ✓ Unlike a summary, an abstract does not have to end with a conclusion.
- ✓ Do not include extensive background, literature review, detailed methods, nor references.
- ✓ Do not add any new material.

A possible way to write an abstract

The abstract is usually written when the entire report is finished. We suggest the following steps in order to arrive at a reader-oriented abstract:

1. First re-read the report taking notes and writing down keywords.
2. Secondly, using the notes and keywords, write a draft that *rephrases* the purpose, results, conclusions, scope, and methods of the report. Avoid merely lifting sentences from the report to the abstract.
3. Thirdly, read the draft and make sure the essential information of the report is included and no unnecessary information remains.
4. Proof-read and revise the abstract for correctness. Avoid opening the abstract with the phrase 'This report . . .' or similar phrases. While such phrases might help a writer to get started they carry no information and should be replaced.

Example abstract

(1) The investigations for this research sought to discover if the motivation of employees in all industries is affected by the environment or culture in which they work. (2) This research undertaken in Melbourne, Australia investigated the effect of the workplace environment encountered on a construction site on motivation and demotivation of construction personnel. (3) The data collected supported the hypothesis that the environment of a construction site does affect demotivation levels of site personnel. Specifically, several variables were significantly linked to this result, including long hours, chaos, non-recognition for work done and colleagues' aggressive management style. (4) The results provide a valuable basis for indicating how the construction industry can create a more attractive workplace environment for professional site staff.

1= Purpose

2= Scope (i.e. the framework of the report-what it includes)

3= Results

4= Conclusions

For more information, check out our writing portal: <http://writing.chalmers.se>

12. Giving a Presentation

Content

- What is the **main message** you are going to communicate?
- Who are you communicating the message to? Who is **your audience**? Why should they want to hear this? What is the **purpose** of communicating this?
- What information do you need to include? Is it **relevant**?
- How are you going to **organise** the information?

Form

- **Organisation**

Introduction (introduce yourself and your subject)

Main body of information

Conclusion (say your main message again)

- **Logical progression**
- **Smooth transitions**-don't jump from one part to the next; hand over to the next speaker
- **Signposting** (Firstly, secondly...)-see Cues and Prompts for Presentations below
- **Language**

Vocabulary (simple, clear)

Grammar (accurate)

Pronunciation (make sure you can say difficult words)

Delivery and logistics

- **Voice**

Use a 'speaker's voice'!

Clear voice which can be heard and isn't too fast

Use pauses

Emphasise important points

- **Audience involvement**

Eye contact (with the **whole** group!)

Body language (look confident, hands out of pockets!)

Visual aids (relevant / clear / possible to see)

- **Timing:** what is the time limit? Rehearse to check you can stay on it.
- **Notes:** use an appropriate manuscript e.g. notecards, mindmaps

The most important thing is to be prepared - practice makes perfect!

Cues and Prompts for Presentations

Introduction	Introduce yourself	<i>My name is _____ and I'm _____</i>		
	Purpose/ Subject	<i>I'm here to</i>	<i>tell you about.....</i>	
		<i>I've been asked to</i>	<i>talk to you about....</i>	
Body	Structure	<i>I'd like to divide my presentation into</i>	<i>3 main areas</i>	
		<i>First(ly)</i>	<i>First of all</i>	
		<i>Second(ly)</i>	<i>Then</i>	
Conclusion	Transitions	<i>To begin/start with...</i>	<i>I'd like to start by-ing</i>	
		<i>Following that...</i>		
		<i>Next we'd like to</i>	<i>look at</i>	
Conclusion	Visuals	<i>As you can see from this</i>	<i>flow chart</i>	
		<i>This</i>	<i>graph</i>	<i>shows...</i>
		<i>If we</i>	<i>turn to this map</i>	<i>illustrates...</i>
Conclusion	Ending	<i>Finally,</i>	<i>I'd like to say</i>	
		<i>In conclusion,</i>	<i>that...</i>	
		<i>To sum up,</i>		
Conclusion		<i>I'd like to</i>	<i>end</i>	<i>by saying</i>
			<i>finish</i>	
			<i>conclude</i>	
Conclusion			<i>sum</i>	
			<i>up</i>	

Presentation slides

The visual support you use in a presentation is just as important as the oral component, since many people will pay as much attention to your slides as to your talk itself. Therefore, care should be taken to make the slides help you communicate your main ideas and visually represent complex information in a manner that is easy for audiences to comprehend.

Organization

When planning your slides, consider the purpose of the presentation.

- *How can you visually represent vital pieces of information?* Carefully consider whether a table, chart, schematic, or other figure would best help the audience.
- *What do you want your audience to remember?* Having a clear “take-away message” will help focus the information that you present (and allow you to avoid discussing unnecessary details).
- *How can you return the attention of audience members whose attention wanders, or help daydreaming audience members re-join the flow of the talk?* Ensuring that all slides have titles, including main points and key pieces of evidence, and presenting information in its simplest form will help keep the audience’s focus.

Slides that can help give the visuals structure include:

- A title slide (with the name of your talk as well as the names of all presenters)
- An agenda slide (that provides the key sections of the talk before you present your information)
- A summary slide (at the end, to remind viewers of the key points you need them to remember)

Timing & coordination

When displaying your slides, timing matters. How? Timing is important in that:

- *What you say should complement your slides.* Reading aloud the information on your slides verbatim is not ideal, and tends to lull audiences into listlessness. Instead, create slides that enhance the oral portion of the presentation, which means that the slides should help the audience
 - Receive an overview of what is being said, or
 - See a visual that clarifies what is being said.
- *Slides should not be changed too quickly.* If a slide is displayed for less than approximately 45 seconds, the audience will not have sufficient time to see what is there.
- *Slides should not be changed too slowly.* If a slide is on screen for more than approximately one minute, the audience’s attention is more likely to wander.

Style choices

Always think of the audience when designing slides, and use of the goal of enhancing audience understanding when you create your slides. Slides should be:

- Easy for everyone to see and read, including those with poor vision and people seated in the back of the room.
- Presented in colors and fonts that facilitate quick reading.

- Consistent in style (i.e. fonts and sizes of words should remain the same, a consistent color scheme should be employed, and a sense of unity should be preserved).
- Not too busy (which means that a minimalist approach to ornamentation, imagery, and animation is preferable).

To make good style choices, be sure to consider:

- the lighting in the room,
- the distance of the audience from the screen, and
- the size of the screen.

If you ever give a presentation using your computer as the screen, for instance, you must think particularly strategically about the size of visuals as well as the size of text that you use.

Remember, too, that empty space on a slide can help rest viewers' eyes, can help focus the audience's attention on what you want them to see, and can prevent the audience from being overwhelmed or distracted by busy visuals.

Interacting with slides

Drawing the audience's attention to particular parts of a slide can be achieved through a presenter's interaction with the slides. A laser pointer can be used for this, but useful low-tech options include gesturing with your open hand or pointing finger to key elements of a slide, or using a wooden pointer (which many rooms at Chalmers have, but not all rooms. So, plan accordingly).

Note also your positioning in relationship to the screen. Are you blocking the projected information? Are you standing too far away from the screen to interact with the slides? Lastly, try to avoid simply standing still. A presenter's movements can draw the audience's attention, so consider how you can best use movement to enhance your presentation.

Effective images

Visuals can help the audience understand your data or better follow your key points. But poorly chosen visuals will only distract audiences, so be strategic when including images, figures, and tables in your slides. To do so:

- Include a title for every slide. This way, you can let audiences know what is important about a visual. Also, if someone's attention wanders, they will still be able to understand the main point of your slide.
- Consider the size of your visuals. If they are too small, they will not serve any helpful purpose.
- Break up complex images. If you have a large schematic or other complex image, it is helpful to show the large image first, then show the section of interest by itself. If there are several such sections, each can be isolated on its own slide. Remember, if a large quantity of information is on the screen at once, viewers will not know where to look. Extraneous information draws attention away from what is important.
- Use color or shapes to highlight key pieces. If you want to draw viewers' attention to a particular element of a table, figure, or image, use a colored circle or band of highlighting to guide their eyes.