

MEMORANDUM

To: Syed Ahmed, Team Undefined Member
From: Richard Chen, Team Undefined Member
Date: December 15, 2020
Subject: Application Package Draft Peer Review

Greetings Syed,

Thank you for completing your application package draft. It was a pleasure to read and done quite nicely.

First Impressions

Each section of the package was done to a high degree of quality. The resume and cover letter communicates your qualifications nicely. There are some details regarding personalizing each that would make each even better. Please see each section for the specifics.

Cover Letter

Great work on the cover letter. The cover letter was tailored to address the specific needs of the job posting. The inclusion of your experience with various microbiology/molecular biology methods clearly targets the preferred qualification of “experience with basic molecular biology”.

Areas for consideration:

- Personalizing the greeting can go a long way to increasing the chances of gaining an interview. If possible, researching who the potential hiring manager is and personalizing the greeting with a name shows a lot of initiative.
- The current cover letter is excellently focused on qualifications. Including a brief sentence or two on the motivation for working at that specific lab may also increase the chance of landing an interview. Is there any specific research the lab, or its principal investigator is doing that is interesting?

Resume

The resume is formatted correctly according to reverse chronological work experience order. It also maintains a section of relevant research and laboratory skills, which appeals to the specific needs of the scientific research community.

Areas for consideration:

- While the resume currently fits on two pages, prioritizing certain skills and removing anything not directly relevant to the job posting will increase the resume’s readability. For example, if it can be determined that “Rearing and life-history trait testing of Fruit Fly *Drosophila melanogaster*” is not needed for this posting, it can likely be omitted.

Reference Letters

Good job incorporating specific details in each of the requests for reference letters. Each reference letter has a clear bridge in the first paragraph based on past interactions with the individual, bringing the request to a personal level. This increases the likelihood that the request will be looked upon as doing a personal favor, rather than a blanket request like that of a stranger's.

Additionally, providing background information on the job posting and enclosing a resume and cover letter gives the requestee more information to write a targeted, and specific reference letter should they accept. Well done on the inclusion of those details.

Areas for consideration:

- Including the particulars of the research experience gained working under each requestee relevant to the posting. Naming specific skills learned under the requestee's supervision can assist them in identifying what to focus on in writing the reference letter. This is more relevant to the reference letters to Dr. Nunes and Dr. Azhar.
- Writing out any acronyms used in its entirety in the first instance it is used removes any potential ambiguity, even in cases where the acronym is industry standard.

Grammar & Tone

No issues with grammar are noted in this review. The tone appears to be appropriate in the case of the cover and reference letters. In the letter with Dr. Nunes, it is noted that the introduction begins with a light joke. While it may be safer to remain completely professional, appropriate jokes can be used to effectively rekindle contact, so long as it is within the expectations of past interactions.

Conclusion

Overall, the application package was done very well and with few improvements needed. The cover letter effectively communicates your qualifications, and the reference letters are compelling based on past relationships. The few improvements that would improve the package focuses on:

- Tailoring the resume more towards the job posting's requirements, omitting details less relevant.
- Including the particulars of research experience gained under each reference letter requestee to better prepare the writer of each letter.