

Speculative Applications



STEP 2

Careers & Employability
University of Lincoln



Speculative Applications

A speculative application involves proactively approaching an employer to seek out opportunities that have not been advertised. This approach can be especially relevant for finding a career with small employers who don't recruit graduates onto a formal scheme, find jobs in a highly specialised field or roles in a specific location.

In this guide:

- Creative job searching
- Why use speculative applications?
- Starting a speculative application
- Ideas for speculative applications
- Writing your cover letter

Creative Job Searching

What is a Creative Job Search?

A Creative Job Search is an active approach using lateral thinking to research careers and make job applications. This approach means that instead of waiting and reacting to job vacancies that appear on the internet, you instead take the initiative in seeking out and making career opportunities for yourself.

Starting your Creative Job Search

1

Think about the career you want

Move away from simply looking at vacancy websites, and think about your career plan. What sort of job roles do you want? What sort of companies, and what kind of industries would you like to work in?

2

Make a shortlist

Focus on organisations that suit your criteria for the kind of career and sectors you would like to work in (education, HR, etc). Visiting a [Careers Fair](#) will provide you with a great opportunity to find out more about relevant employers and vacancies, and network with different companies.

Don't forget to think outside the box! For example, many companies will have marketing departments - look beyond specialised marketing companies to find your career in marketing. Network* and use your contacts.

3

Look for specific vacancies

Check in with the employers you've shortlisted to see if they are, in fact, advertising for a position that you would be interested in - or something that would help you get a foot in the door for your preferred role later.

4

Research and prepare your Speculative Application

Identify a company you are interested in and find out as much as you can about them - look at their website(s). You want to be as well-informed as possible.

Don't miss
the annual
Find Your Feet
Careers Fair!
[uolcareers.
co.uk/fyf](http://uolcareers.co.uk/fyf)

*Read our Networking resource for more information

Why Make Speculative Applications?

Some organisations won't always advertise or widely publicise their roles for a variety of reasons- and some employers may not even realise they need another employee until the appropriate person approaches them. Making a speculative application will help you access what people call the 'Hidden Job Market' of unadvertised roles. If nothing else, they will get you in contact with an employer, gaining information that could help you when a vacancy does arise.

Get support

At the University of Lincoln you still have access to the University's Careers & Employability Service for up to 15 months after graduation. You can also have online assistance for up to three years after graduating. Looking through the information we have on local employers could give you an idea of where to make a speculative application. We also have case studies from the University's alumni network, giving you some ideas about the opportunities available to you as a University of Lincoln graduate.



Starting a Speculative Application

Finding a contact

The first hurdle you will face is finding an appropriate contact to send your speculative application to. Finding a named contact is the number one rule of making speculative applications, as generic 'Dear Sir/Madam' letters sent to HR departments are often ignored - leaving you with no response.

Make use of your network. Family friends, University lecturers and your peers may be able to give you insights into their working lives and any potential job opportunities with their employers. Make the best possible use of social media, including your LinkedIn profile.

Take some time to research the company using a search engine or social media site like LinkedIn. Identify the person within that organisation who you believe might be responsible for a role you want - then address your application to them. Recruitment events and careers fairs will offer you a unique opportunity to talk to a company directly and ask for an appropriate contact person. If these avenues fail, a quick phone call to the company to ask for the name of whoever is responsible for recruiting will enable you to personalise your approach.

What is in a Speculative Application?

Most students and graduates make contact with an organisation by sending their CV and an accompanying cover letter. These will be similar to a standard Cover Letter and CV and they still need to be tailored to the organisation and role you want, even though you do not have an actual job advert to respond to.

It's essential that your cover letter is concise and that it emphasises what you can do for the employer rather than what you want from them.

Ideas for Speculative Applications

Written or Emailed Applications



This is the most traditional approach.

- Ensure you address your application to a named contact.
- If sending an email, ensure you send your CV and Cover Letter as separate attachments in addition to writing a proper introduction to yourself in the body of your email
- To improve your chances of success, follow up your Speculative Application with a phone call a few days after you have sent it.

Phone Calls

This is a quick and direct way to speak to someone about whether or not they would accept an application from you.

- Think through your approach carefully. Write a script to help you.
- Don't be discouraged if the person who answers your call is unhelpful. Ask them for an appropriate contact, or the best method to request information.



In-Person

This is the most direct approach. As you will be presenting yourself, ensure you approach similar to how you would approach a job interview.



- Dress smartly.
- Ask to speak to someone from Human Resources, or the hiring manager.
- Script and practice a short introduction for yourself - highlight your skills, education and experience. Pitch what you can offer to the company.
- Leave a nicely printed and presented CV and Cover Letter with the person you speak to.

Writing your Cover Letter

Think of your speculative approach as a compelling argument as to how you would be great for the organisation. There is no 'right' way to make a Cover Letter as every employer is different, and what may suit one could be inappropriate for another. Some employers may call for more creative approaches. As a guide, however, you will usually want to cover the following points:

1

An Introduction

Tell the employer who you are and why you are writing. Tell them the kind of role you are hoping to gain with them.

2

Why Them?

Show you have done your research into the company and establish your interest in them. Talk about any projects you are interested in and perhaps suggest how you would be able to make worthwhile contributions to these specific areas of their organisation.

3

Why You?

Highlight your skills, experience and education - putting them into a context of how you will use them to be a valuable addition to their company.

4

Open for a follow-up

As there is not a vacancy end-date that you are working within, make sure you specify when you are available to start work, the hours you can work and any requirements you have (for instance, regarding payment). You may also want to request a meeting.

5

Conclusion

Ensure you thank the employer for their time, and finish on a positive note.



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business-orientated social network which can provide opportunities to network online with professionals from all kinds of industries. It can also put you in touch with University of Lincoln Alumni. To create an account go to www.Linkedin.com and select 'Join Now'.

If you want an employer to contact you then ensure you have fully developed your 'profile'. Treat your profile here as part CV, part cover letter. Keyword-rich profiles will help employers find you when they search LinkedIn for possible new employees. Remember to spend time building your profile and keeping it up to date so others can easily contact you.

Get involved with groups relevant to your career path or degree, and engage with others in your desired industry of work to build your network.





Notes

Get support from your Careers & Employability Service

What we offer

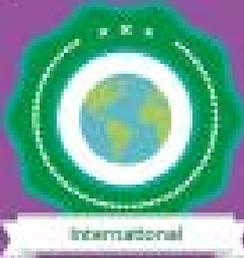
- **Careers Clinic**
Our Skills Advisers are available to support you with all aspects of job search or the recruitment process for any role; part-time, placement, work experience or graduate. Careers Clinic runs Monday-Friday 1-4 pm and is a drop-in session.
- **Careers Guidance**
Our Careers & Employability Advisers offer 1:1 appointments to support you exploring your Career options and planning.
- **Career Events**
We have daily events running to provide information and support your development; some are run by our expert Adviser team and others by employers. All events are advertised here; www.uolcareers.co.uk/events
- **Lincoln Award**
Our employability award is designed to support you in developing and learning how to demonstrate your employability skills. At the end of the award you get the chance to put your learning to the test in our Assessment Centre Experience! Each one is partnered with an employer and students find the opportunity to practise and the feedback they receive invaluable. Full details can be seen here; www.uolcareers.co.uk/lincolnaward
- **Vacancies**
CareerLinc is our online portal where all vacancies are advertised; part-time, placement, work experience and graduate roles. All students are already set up on the system so simply use your University log-in to get started! <https://careers.lincoln.ac.uk>
- **Campus Jobs**
Our Student Employment Agency which advertises all jobs for the University on campus; from admin to retail, one off roles to ongoing part-time jobs, find out more here; <https://uolcareers.co.uk/students-graduates/jobs-employment-options/campus-jobs/>
- **Online Resources**
We have our own Careers & Employability online learning pathways on LinkedIn Learning. Full details can be found here; <https://uolcareers.co.uk/students-graduates/onlinelearning/>. We also provide many other online Career Tools. More information can be seen here; <https://uolcareers.co.uk/students-graduates/career-tools/>



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www.uolcareers.co.uk
www.facebook.com/UOLCareers
www.twitter.com/UOLCareers

WHAT WE OFFER



International



Careers Information



CareerLink



Careers Clinic



Careers Jobs



The Lincoln Award



Graduate Jobs



Group Advice Sessions



Careers Guidance

The Careers & Employability Centre is open

09:00 - 16:30, Mon - Fri

Telephone: 01522 837828

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