

How to...make speculative applications

What is a speculative application?

This is the term used when someone approaches an organisation directly, rather than responding to an advert, to ask whether there are any jobs or other opportunities available.

Why would I apply 'on spec'?

Many job vacancies are not advertised and this also applies to opportunities for internships and work experience placements. In some industries in particular, the majority of jobs are not advertised; good examples would be media, PR and advertising. Sometimes you might be looking for something in a particular geographical location and need to search proactively.

How do I go about it?

You will need an up-to-date CV which you can email, post or deliver by hand together with a covering letter. Ideally, you need to know what you are looking for so that your CV and covering letter is targeted to that particular role or industry; it is vital to get the employer interested. For more information on how to do this, see our handouts and web pages on this topic.

You should try to find a named and relevant person to approach. This is often best done by telephoning, saying you want to send a CV, and getting a name, job role and e-mail address. Sometimes you might find the information on a web site, or via an email query. The name is important, as you should be prepared to follow up your initial approach by telephone or email to check they have received your CV and see if they have anything to offer, or if not, can suggest any other contacts you could make.

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You must be organised and keep a record of who you have approached, together with contact details and progress. Set a realistic weekly target, be persistent and don't take rejection personally; the method can work well if you can just keep at it!

Finding target organisations

If you are searching for a particular job role, start with the Occupational Profile for that job on Prospects Web www.prospects.ac.uk/links/occupations ; this can take you to web directories often kept by professional bodies or trade organisations. Many can be searched by location. It is worth scanning adverts – sometimes an organisation offering a senior role is worth approaching speculatively for something more junior or for work experience.

Keep your eye on any professional magazines or papers for articles indicating which organisations are doing well or expanding. Use your local library and librarians for local and other trade directories as well as sites such as Yell.com.

For more information, see Warwick University's guide to speculative applications (<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/careers/applications/coveringletter/why>)

Don't neglect Google searches, pick up our 'How to' guide on networking and see the potentially useful resources at MMU Careers www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides

Further help

Attend a CV workshop to make your CV and covering letter sparkle. See www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/events for latest dates.

See our job seeking career guides at www.mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides