



# *How to write a motivation letter in 2020*

\*and stay sane

Lydia Kaloeva, Uni Köln, June 2020

## MOTIVATION LETTER

for a scholarship, study or exchange program, summer/winter school, participation in a research/industry-related seminar

## COVER LETTER

for an internship or a position, for a leadership program

## ANY OTHER PIECE OF WRITING

that you need to do to apply somewhere

## 1 WHOLE LETTER

Letter of Motivation

Personal Statement

## ANSWERING GIVEN QUESTIONS

What do you expect to learn from the MA A, and what role does the course play in your further academic, personal, and professional development?

In which ways will your prior experiences, qualifications, and skills support your studies in this new programme?

What is your personal motivation to apply for this program?

## SHORT ESSAYS

Describe an example of a leadership experience...

What will you say is your biggest talent...

A complicated situation that you've successfully managed...

# WORKING ON YOUR LETTER...

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TAKE A CLOSE  
LOOK AT THE  
PROGRAM

3-4 days or at least 3  
uninterrupted hours

WRITING FIRST  
DRAFT

God knows it can be  
weak, but the good  
news is, no one has to  
see it

LET YOUR IDEAS  
DEVELOP AND  
SETTLE DOWN

Giving yourself some  
time to just roam  
around with your  
thoughts is important

WRITING  
SECOND DRAFT

Still might be  
imperfect. that's fine

FINAL EDITING  
AND  
PROOFREADING

!! Someone else

# STRUCTURE

## YOU FOR THE PROGRAM/POSITION

What background relevant for this program do you have and how will you be able to apply it?

Avoid "vacuum"!

## PROGRAM/POSITION FOR YOU

How specifically you specific background will be enhanced through this program (with its specific resources and opportunities) and why do you need it?

## YOU AND THE PROGRAM/COMPANY FOR THE WORLD

What it that you are already doing "for the world" now. that you will able to do 10 times cooler during/after this program?

1

2

3

## 2 KEY ELEMENTS

### MINIMAL COMMITMENT

How are you showing your commitment already?

Usually it is some kind of experience, but sometimes educational achievements can also work

Usually the first part

### EXPLAINED NEED

It is important to understand what specific experience/knowledge/skills/resources you lack. Otherwise why would you need extra education/training?  
It is perfectly okay to not be able to do everything just yet!

Vague cliches like "developing new skills" won't work

Usually the second part

# 3 typical traps

## FROM MY EARLY CHILDHOOD...

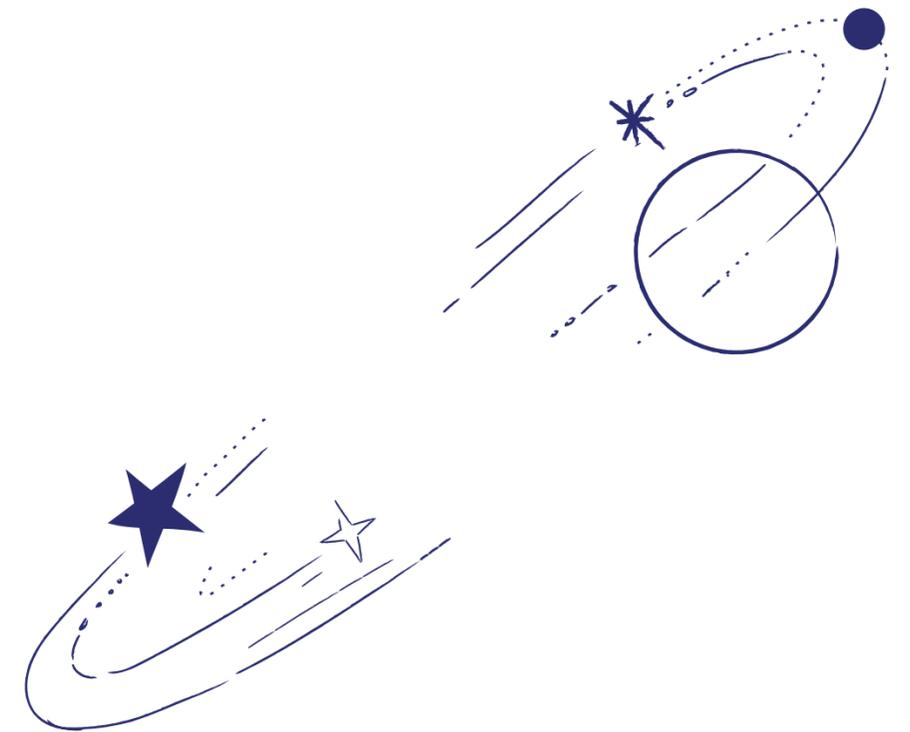
It sadly does not prove anything. You wouldn't be applying to NASA basen on the fact that you wanted to be an astronaut as a kid :)

## I REALLY, REALLY WANT TO

The fact that you want something a lot doesn't prove you are a perfect candidate. Who doesn't want to develop their skills or ger an invaluable experience?

## YOU ARE AN AMAZING PROGRAM/UNI/COMPANY

Once again, so what? That fact that we are on our own cool doesn't explain why you are a good match



# FACTS SHOULD SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

ONLY THAN NOTHING WILL LOOK "VAGUE" OR "EXAGGERATED"

As a very responsible and put together person I am striving to make our world a better place with my work. After graduating ABC master program, I will do my best to help developing virusology both in Russia and abroad.

While developing e-mail advertising campaign with Unilever, our team achieved 9% higher CTR and raised letters open-rate 14% through digital storytelling tools.



A renowned Russian filmmaker Andrei Konchalovsky once said: “a genuine pleasure from pursuing the activity without realising how fast time runs is a sign which will guide you to your mission”. This is exactly what I felt, when me and my teammates were brainstorming legal issues days and nights in preparation for the Jessup competition in Washington, the world's largest competition in public international law. This clearly showed me where the path to my mission lies. The desire to comprehend international law in a nuanced way to elaborate convincing arguments is what has always thrilled me during the “moot court” career. The aim to excel in the field of international law, specifically, international trade law is the reason why I strive to be admitted to the advanced master of laws programme of the KU Leuven University, ranked among the best 45 universities of the world for its innovative research policies and outstanding faculty members.

As to my professional experience, I successfully completed an internship in the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia, where I was involved in doing legal research and drafting submissions for the cases pending before the WTO compliance panel. My professional dream is to work for one of the firms listed as External Legal Counsel for the Advisory Centre on WTO. As my previous experience revealed, the knowledge of the EU economic and trade law is indispensable for practicing trade law given that the EU is the largest international trade actor. The KU Leuven University has a recognised reputation in the European law and the advanced master of law programme offers the subjects I strive to master to practice international trade law, such as the EU economic law, the EU customs and competition law. Additionally, Belgium is the heart of the major trade law practicing law firms, such as Van Bell & Bellis and SIDLEY. Last but not least, as a long-term plan, I endeavour to apply for the PhD programme and to devote my efforts to teaching international trade law. I firmly believe that the knowledge obtained in the programme will be an invaluable asset for me.

# TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PROGRAM

## DESCRIPTION/ ABOUT US/ PROGRAM PASSPORT

What do they say about themselves?

## CURRENT PROJECTS

What are they investing their time and money in?

## ALUMNI/ ALUMNI STORIES

Who are they proud of?

## PERFECT CANDIDATE

If you found this section, you are lucky!

## OUR VALUES

What is important for them and why?

## OUR RESOURCES/ OPPORTUNITIES

Are they proud of their own art space or close collaboration with industrial giants?

## MEDIA & CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, ROTTERDAM

Media & Creative Industries covers current issues in organisation, policies, production, management, marketing and distribution of media companies and creative industries.

## BUSINESS COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL MEDIA, TILBURG

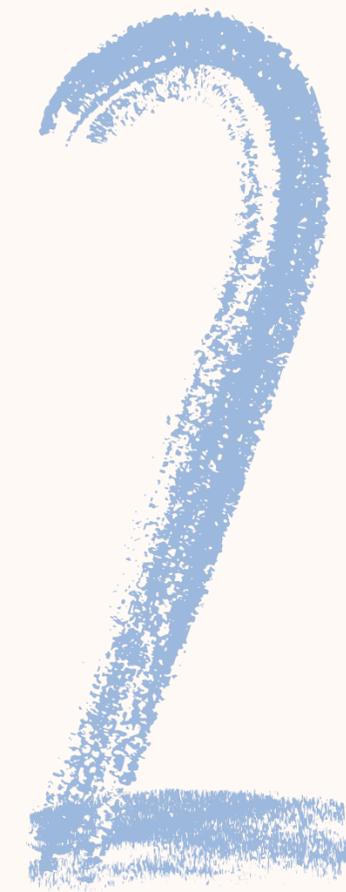
Study how digital media affect communication between companies and their (potential) customers and other stakeholders. Consider the possibilities that these resources offer for internal communication. With a wide range of electives available to you, you can become an all-round communication specialist, or specialize yourself in marketing communication, internal communication or corporate communication.

## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, RADBOUD UNIVERSITY

The creative industries is a dynamic and complex field that changes rapidly due to globalisation and the continual development of new and exciting technologies. At Radboud University we look at many areas of the creative industry, such as fashion, media and education

## NEW MEDIA & DIGITAL CULTURE, UTRECHT

You will delve into the many aspects of what it means to live in an age of new media. Guided by experienced scholars, you will assist with research projects and learn to reflect critically on how present-day cultures are shaped by social media, data, games, internet activism, apps, data visualisations, mobile devices, algorithms, and participatory platforms.



I am sure that The Summer Internship Programme provides an opportunity to take part in cutting-edge research at the highest level. The main purpose of the internship for me is to gain skills and knowledge in international collective of world-class scientist. Doing a project under an experienced supervisor will be a great possibility to it. Collaboration with experimental biologist attracts me in the computational projects of this programme. New skills in single cell omics will allow me to become a more competent scientist and to do my Bachelor's project at higher level.

The Summer Internship Programme allows starting a worldwide network at the beginning of a career path. I hope scientific meetings will give me insight into contemporary epigenetics and stem cell biology. I am motivated to present my findings and improve my presentation skills too. Communication with qualified specialists and students from around the world who are interested in science as myself will motivate me to achieve new goals.



Be careful with storytelling. Make sure you go in details not for its own sake, but because it contributes something to you letter.

## KPI

Even if you officially never had them, look them up for your industry - it will help to evaluate the amount of work you did

"WHAT YOU  
HAVE DONE"  
INSTEAD OF  
"WHAT YOU  
WERE DOING"

- responsibilities

## REAL HANDS-ON RESULT

What have you managed to make better/improve?

WHAT WAS THE  
GOAL?

Explain the value you project/company brought to the world

*Thinking in  
terms of  
value that  
you add*

# *How to show your impact*

**THERE IS SOME  
PROBLEM/  
CHALLENGE /  
NEEDS TO BE  
SOLVED  
(SETTING)**

2

YOU DO SPECIFIC  
ACTIONS  
(CONTRIBUTION)

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3

THE SITUATION IS  
SOMEHOW IMPROVED  
(IMPACT)

# URBAN SOCIOLOGIST



"I've managed to take part in the manual collection and processing of quantitative and qualitative data and contribute to our research".

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Second largest urban planning bureau in Russia responsible for reconstruction of Moscow streets

Collected traffic information in 3 streets in the city center for 1+ month (manually with a clicker - pedestrians, vehicles, bicycles) and observed potentially problematic situations (people crossing, traffic jams in rush hours, etc)

Visualised data in Adobe Illustrator and analysed them

2 out of 3 street have already undergone the construction and their accident rate fell 1,3%

# SAMPLE ACTION VERBS LISTED BY FUNCTIONAL SKILL AREA

## COMMUNICATION

Aided  
Advised  
Arbitrated  
Clarified  
Co-authored  
Collaborated  
Consulted  
Coordinated  
Counseled  
Defined  
Enlisted  
Formulated  
Influenced  
Informed  
Inspired  
Interpreted  
Interviewed  
Mediated  
Merged  
Negotiated  
Promoted  
Publicized  
Recommended  
Represented  
Resolved  
Suggested

## CREATIVE

Performed  
Planned  
Problem solved  
Shaped  
Synthesized  
Visualized  
Wrote

## DETAIL ORIENTED

Analyzed  
Approved  
Arranged  
Classified  
Collated  
Compared  
Compiled  
Documented  
Enforced  
Followed through  
Met deadlines  
Prepared  
Processed  
Recorded  
Retrieved  
Set priorities  
Systemized  
Tabulated

## MANUAL SKILLS

Arranged  
Assembled  
Bound  
Built  
Checked  
Classified  
Constructed  
Controlled  
Cut  
Designed  
Developed  
Drove  
Handled  
Installed  
Invented  
Maintained  
Monitored  
Prepared  
Operated  
Repaired  
Tested

## PROVIDING SERVICE

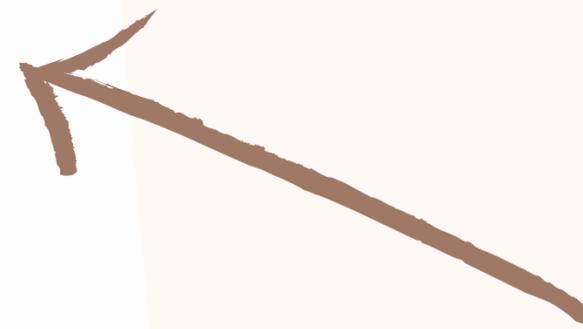
Advised  
Attended  
Cared  
Coached

## ORGANIZING

Achieved  
Assigned  
Consulted  
Contracted  
Controlled  
Coordinated  
Decided  
Delegated  
Developed  
Established  
Evaluated  
Negotiated  
Organized  
Planned  
Prepared  
Prioritized  
Produced  
Recommended  
Reported

## LEADERSHIP

Administered  
Chaired  
Convinced  
Directed  
Examined  
Executed  
Expanded  
Facilitated  
Improved  
Initiated



*active verbs*

## DREAMS

My professional dream is to work for one of the firms listed as External Legal Counsel for the Advisory Centre on WTO

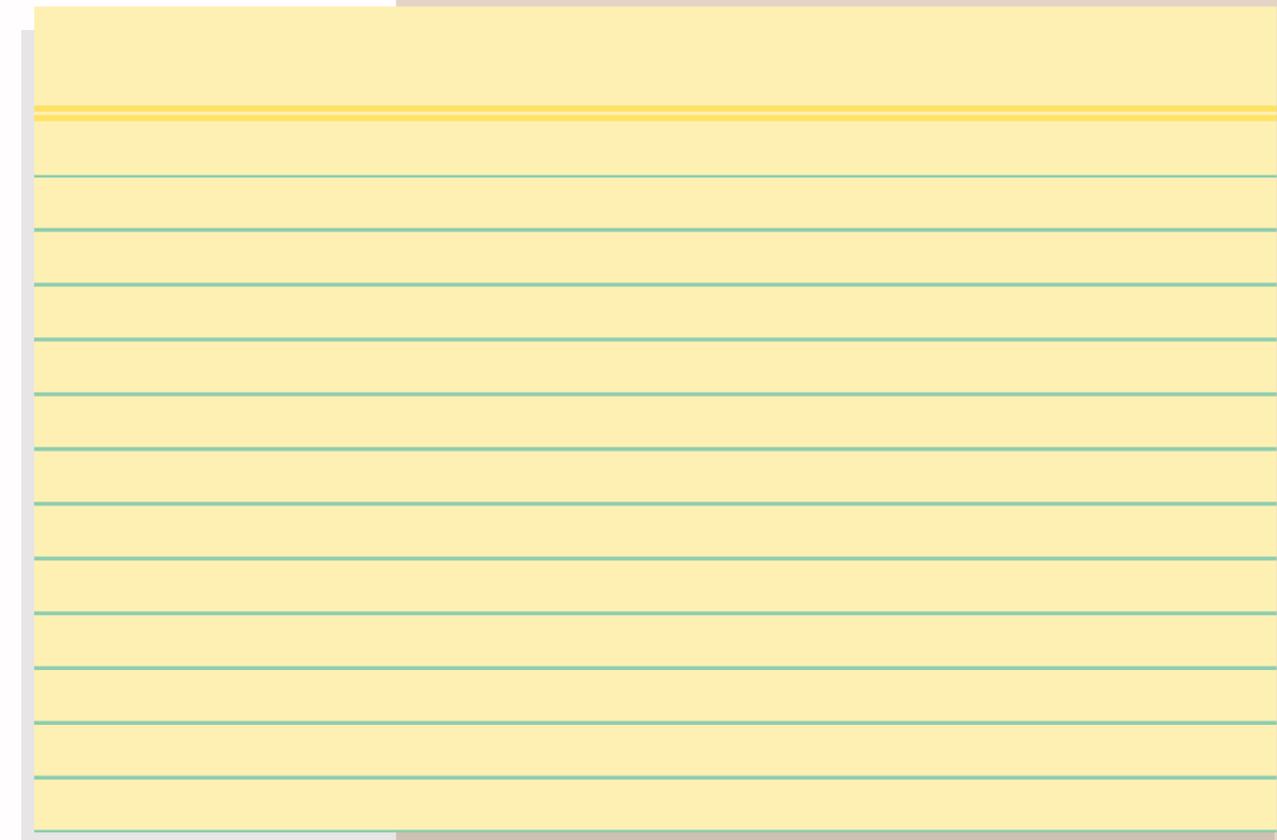
## PLANS

In my career and personal way, I would like to become independence scientist to work on my research projects

## STRATEGIES

Therefore, I pursue a *Master's* degree and a PhD to become a research group leader

**SUBSTITUTING  
MEANINGFUL  
PART WITH THE  
FORMAL ONE**



# RED FLAGS!

## ADJECTIVES

successfully  
completed

exceptional written  
and verbal  
communication skills

amazing

## CLICHES

truly life-changing  
experience

invaluable asset

essential  
experience

99% of quotes

thinking outside  
the box

## VAGUE IMPACT

managed to take  
part

was involved

participated

assisted

## "SO WHAT?"

I believe

I hope

"I firmly believe  
that the  
knowledge  
obtained..."

## "NO PROFS, BUT PLEASE BELIEVE ME "

I am highly motivated

I am a great problem  
solver

I am capable of  
work well independently  
and as part of a team

**PHEW, WE ARE DONE! WAS IT  
USEFUL?**