Professional Correspondence

*What, When, Why, & How?*

Professional correspondence is any communication you have with a professional contact, recruiter, or company. First impressions are important, and often your first interaction with an employer is through written communication.

Reasons to send professional correspondence:
- Information-seeking – despite online research, you may still need to inquire about a company you are interested in
- **Thank-you notes** – for any interaction with a professional contact. For example, after a job/internship interview, an informational interview, or meeting with a recruiter at a career fair.
- Cover letters (letters of application and inquiry); see Cover Letter handout
- Follow-up notes after applying for a job or internship to inquire about status of your application
- Accepting a job/internship offer, or withdrawing from search (samples below)
- Requesting an extension of deadline to respond to a job/internship offer
- Request to connect on LinkedIn (sample below)

**Thank You Notes**
Always send a note after:
- An interview for a job or internship
- An informational interview
- A contact is helpful to you in a telephone conversation
- A contact was helpful to you at a career fair
- Any other contact for which you want to express thanks and develop a good relationship

Correspondence should be sent within two business days of the interaction.

***Did You Know?***
It is good business etiquette to send a thank you note to *each person with whom you have interacted* – even if it is a large group. And you should do this regardless of whether or not you’re actually interested if the job is offered. Believe it or not, offers have been extended (or not!) based on whether a candidate took the time for this important final step.

**Handwritten/Typed Letter vs. Email**
Students often ask whether or not it is acceptable practice to send an email in lieu of a written letter. Since email is such a widely accepted business tool, it is appropriate to send email correspondence. It’s also a very nice idea to follow-up with a hand-written note.

**Handwritten or Typed Letters**
Handwritten or typed thank-you notes should be sent on personal or professional stationary. Appropriate options include note cards or paper with your name or initials, or Hampden-Sydney note cards. Hand-written notes are always written in blue or black ink.

*Hint!* To avoid errors, compose your note on a scrap piece of paper before writing it on your nice stationary.
The Email
While an email will not offer the personal quality of a handwritten note, your gesture is important and appreciated. Keep it simple and use a regular font style such as Times Roman or Arial, size 12 or 13 point. If you have a signature line at the end of your email, make sure that it is appropriate to include in this message. Send your correspondence from your H-SC email or a personal account with a professional username.

See next page for samples of email and handwritten thank you notes.

A mailed note is a nice compliment to an immediate email. The advantage of an email is the immediacy of the sentiment. It is good practice to follow-up with a note, either handwritten or typed. Professionals often receive many emails daily, so the mailed note makes a lasting impression.

Noteworthy Suggestions

Suggestion #1: Be concise and specific.
While it is tempting to go into great detail about your experience, your note should be concise and to the point. Including specific details about your interaction with the contact(s) is not only crucial but adds a personal touch for the reader.

Suggestion #2: Maintain professionalism.
Regardless of your personal or professional relationship with your contact(s), your correspondence should always remain professional. Address the recipient properly (Mr., Ms.) and include specifics mentioned in suggestion #1.

Suggestion #3: Say “thank you”.
Always thank your contact(s) for the opportunity they afforded you. What’s a thank you note without the words thank you? After all, your reason for sending the note is to thank them.

Suggestion #4: Proofread and edit.
Always, always proofread any correspondence before sending. Ask your roommate, or someone nearby, to edit for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. The Career Coaches at Career Education are happy to look over any letters before you send them.
Sample Thank You Note

April 7, 2014

Dear Ms. Washington,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you on Wednesday to discuss the Paralegal opportunity with Smith, Overstreet, Lockheed and Nash. I admire the firm’s goals and my visit only further emphasized my enthusiasm of the possibility of joining your staff. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Joe Jobseeker

Sample Thank You E-Mail

From: Joe Jobseeker [jobseekerj@hsc.edu]
Sent: Friday, April 7, 2014 1:38 PM
To: Deloris Washington [mailto:dlwashington@soln.com]
Subject: Interview Opportunity - Wednesday, April 5

Dear Ms. Washington,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you on Wednesday to discuss the Paralegal opportunity with Smith, Overstreet, Lockheed and Nash. I admire the firm’s goals and my visit only further emphasized my enthusiasm of the possibility of joining your staff. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Joe Jobseeker
**Acceptance Letter**
Per our telephone conversation of April 20, 2015, I would like to confirm my acceptance of your employment offer. The position of Research Assistant provides exactly the kind of experience I had hoped to find. I feel confident that I can make a significant contribution to IBT Corporation, and I am grateful for the opportunity you have given me.

As we discussed, I will report to work on Monday, July 5, 2015. Again, thank you for your offer. I will keep in touch as my start date nears.

**Letter Declining Job Offer**
Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on Friday to discuss the opportunities for employment within your research and development department. While I appreciate your generous offer, I have decided to decline the position. I have accepted a position elsewhere which I feel is better suited to my long-term goals.

Again, many thanks for your time. I wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors at AlliedSignal.

You get 300 characters for a LinkedIn request – use them wisely!

**Sample LinkedIn Connection Request:**

Dear ______,

As a sophomore at H-SC majoring in History, I found your profile in the Find Alumni section and see that you were also a History major. I would appreciate adding you to my professional network as I explore the (field/industry).

Thank you for your consideration,

Your Name

**Sample Email Requesting a Phone/In-Person Conversation:**

Dear ______,

I do not believe we have ever actually met, but we were on the Hill together for a year before you graduated. I am now a senior getting ready to graduate in May and I am an aspiring entrepreneur. I have a strong relationship with Ellen Masters and she has had nothing but great things to say about you in my meetings with her. I was hoping to start building a relationship with you, as it seems like you have become a successful entrepreneur in your short time since graduating from H-SC. I have been coming up with new ideas, but I am having a hard time taking my ideas and making them a reality. I was wondering if you could offer any advice from when you were in my place, and were getting ready to start Quantifize Solutions Inc.

I know you are very busy, but if you have any free time when we could speak I would greatly appreciate it.

I hope to hear from you soon,

Your Name

**Key Elements:**

- Introduce yourself and how you received their contact information.
- Share your aspirations and professional goals.
- Tell the contact why you wanted to connect and talk.
- Acknowledge that the contact is busy, and asked for their time.