

Cover Letters

The function of a cover letter is to provide a brief synopsis to either reviewers as an introduction to your paper/research proposal or for responding to their reviews. This piece of writing is *always* your first chance to impress them and show respect and value towards the time taken to either potentially review your work or in providing a review. Here are few tips to remember when writing a cover letter:

- Your writing needs to impress your reader. That is, you need to maintain coherence and cohesion, and use the appropriate and correct format. You need to tell a story that convinces your reader that your research is worthy of ethical approval, funding approval or submission to a journal.
- Always check the requirements for your cover letter but generally one page is sufficient.
- Your cover letter will follow a similar format to writing a business letter. For example, it must include the address of both you and the intended reader/responsible person/office details.

Introduction: Brief summary of your paper/thank your reviewers, editor for the reviewer reports.

- What is the proposed title?
- What is the aim of the study?
- Why are you submitting to this journal/funding body (if applicable)?
- What value will your research provide to the discipline/contribute to the journal/field?

Body: Summarise the main comments provided by the reviewers and how you addressed them/provide details to any attachments to the research proposal/paper.

Conclusion: Thank your intended reader for their time. Welcome questions or clarity to your submission by providing your email address/contact number.

Remember that every writer has their own style of writing and there is no one letter format that fits every situation. However, there are some essential elements that prospective funders or journal editors pay attention to before they decide to accept your paper for review.

See examples of different cover letters below.

Compiled by Taahira Goolam Hoosen, 2024.



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Example 1

Faculty of Health Sciences – Human Research Ethics Admin Office
c/o Professor Marc Blockman
Human Research Ethics Committee
E52, Room 24, Old Main Building, Groote Schuur Hospital
Observatory, Cape Town, 7925

Dear Professor Blockman,

We are submitting this research protocol, ‘Investigating the liminal moments in first year Health Sciences academic writing’ as a new study protocol for undergraduate research to be undertaken by the 3rd year MBChB students as part of their Special Study Module (SSM). According to the Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures for the Protocol Review Process, this study is classified as a minimal risk study. As such, we are submitting this protocol for expedited ethical review.

We attach the following forms with our research protocol:
FHS021 – New Protocol Application Form For Undergraduate Research
FHS014 – Synopsis

With the following Annexes:
APPENDIX A – Research Study Advertisement
APPENDIX B – Survey Instrument
APPENDIX C – Participant information and consent

Please do not hesitate to contact me should any additional information be required.

Kind Regards,

Taahira Goolam Hoosen (Principal Investigator)

Faculty of Health Sciences Writing Lab
Department of Health Sciences Education
Email: taahira.goolamhoosen@uct.ac.za



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Example 2

14 March 2024

Dear Daniela

Thank you for taking the time to coordinate the review of our original article, entitled “New academics’ experiences of intractable precarity: Dealing with conditions of coloniality through collective reflexivity”, submitted to CriSTaL on the 5th of October 2023. Please note that in the re-writing process we have re-named the paper: “South African new academics’ experiences of precarity: Becoming and unbecoming the condition of coloniality through collective reflexivity”. We feel that the new title aligns better with the clearer focus of the paper brought into being by the astute comments and insights of the reviewers.

We were very pleased to receive a request to ‘revise and resubmit’, along with the two critical and constructive reviewer reports and detailed tracked comments. We have addressed all of the concerns raised by Reviewer A and B. We attach both a clean version of our paper and a version showing the track changes addressing the reviewers' comments.

Reviewer A first pointed out that the Ubuntu lens lacks sufficient emphasis in our paper and was an area to strengthen. We have now more clearly indicated this by a new section with a conceptual framework. They also highlighted the tenuous nature of the connection between precarity and the concept of becoming and unbecoming which should be more prominently featured in our findings. We addressed this throughout the paper and specifically in the findings section.

Furthermore, Reviewer A recommended a more robust data set that closely aligns with our claims. Their specific comments in the document were valuable in helping us revise this crucial part of the paper. We have attended to all their comments within the document and made the enhancements suggested.

On the other hand, Reviewer B highlighted an important technical aspect that we have addressed by ensuring the consistency of the page number with our citations. They also suggested a roadmap in our introduction which was useful for not only setting up our audience but clarify for us, as authors of the paper. We have addressed this by adding in such a map as the final paragraph of the introduction.

They also suggested a better flow of argument in our literature review which we have also worked on to enhance coherence. Here, too, their constructive feedback and plan to help us improve this section was valuable to also ensure cohesion within and between paragraphs. We addressed this by adding an introduction that sets out the steps the literature review will take and provides an overview of this section. We have also made sure that we draw these linkages out between paragraphs and signpost for the reader the jumps or connections made so that they may follow more easily. We also worked on improving topic sentences as well as concluding statements by incorporating linking sentences to the next paragraph.

Lastly, Reviewer B suggested a more explicit discussion on the potential limitations or critiques of collective reflexivity in the context of decoloniality to help us enhance the depth of our argument. We addressed this by emphasising in the second paragraph the “danger of romanticising the notion of collective reflexivity”. This paragraph unpacks more of the limitations of collective reflexivity and potential critiques in the context of decolonisation.

Overall, we feel that the feedback from the reviewers, and the process of revision have led to a far more critical manuscript within which we grapple with the various concepts and theories that have informed our work. This revision has brought us to a clearer sense of our own argument, and we now think that the manuscript has far more to offer.

We wish to reiterate our thanks to you, and to extend our thanks to our reviewers, for your time and consideration.

Please address all correspondence concerning this manuscript to me at taahira.goolamhoosen@uct.ac.za

Kind regards,
Taahira Goolam Hoosen



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