

Careers Factsheet

Speculative Applications

Not all jobs are advertised, so be proactive with your search and apply 'on spec' to open up a more direct route into a company; applying in this way could potentially lead to:

- temporary or permanent work;
- internships or work shadowing opportunities;
- increased business connections.

Plan your approach

To find success with a speculative application you need to be organised from the start. Sending an unchecked CV and general cover letter isn't enough. Remember, recruiters spend their time sifting through hundreds of applications, so be memorable by following these tips:

1. Start by drawing up a **shortlist of target employers** by focusing on the sectors and companies that interest you. Go to our intranet hub/Job hunting/[Company search tab](#) for this task.
2. Once you've identified where you'd like to work you'll need to do some **background research** in order to appear knowledgeable and well informed. Look on the company website for general information, but also do industry research by going to our intranet hub/Job hunting/[Subscription resources tab](#).
3. Check the company's **social media channels** to keep up to date with their current events and activities. What are they interested in? Have they won awards? What are their developments?
4. Look on LinkedIn to see if any **Cranfield alumni** have worked there – by name-dropping you can add a unique fact into your cover letter or introduction email.
5. Try to **find a link between your aims and the employer's objectives**. If you discover there is a current skills gap or an emerging trend, then you might just be able to fill it with your qualifications or experience.
6. Use speculative applications as part of a **longer-term strategy** to start a conversation with the employer. You may not find a vacancy immediately, but a good speculative application will stick in their memory for next time.

Find the right contact

In order to reach someone with hiring authority and to make your job application stand out, try where possible to include a named contact.

1. If you can't find the relevant contact information on the company website, call the organisation and ask who is in charge of recruitment.
2. Alternatively do a LinkedIn search of the company and look up job titles such as 'HR Business Partner', 'Recruitment Partner' and 'Graduate Hiring Officer' etc.
3. If you're feeling confident (or draw a blank on the above), approach the person in charge of the company ('Managing Director', 'Director', 'CEO').

Tailor your approach

Showcase your knowledge of the company, its aims and objectives, and what **how** you could add value.

1. **Introduce yourself** your situation, and highlight what attracts you to the company.

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2. **Be very specific** do their values and approach echo your own? Do they have an emerging technology that you are desperate to work with? Have they just won a major contract and will need manpower to fulfil it?
3. **Sell your skills, qualities and experience** focus on your unique selling points. Have you won any accolades for your group project or thesis? Can you provide a short testimonial from a tutor or previous employer?
4. **Emphasise what you can bring** to the company, rather than what the company can do for you.

Top 3 tips

Follow up your application about 1 - 2 weeks after sending - this allows time for your email to be read. *Persistence* is reasonable but pestering can be annoying!

Focus on how your values and personality match the company ethos - you obviously need to have the appropriate skill set for the job but don't get hung up on technicalities. You can be trained for most positions but the *right personality fit* isn't something that can be taught.

Keep going - stay resilient and remember that *every interaction* is a seed planted. Some may grow and harvest immediately, and others may spring up when you least expect it.