

Letterhead with your current name, institutional affiliation, mailing address etc.

Date

Professor XYZ  
Chair, Search committee  
Department of Teacher Education  
Airhead University

Dear professor XYZ;

Your first paragraph orients the readers to your purpose and alerts them that you are a good candidate.

I am writing in response to your advertisement for an assistant professor in teacher education. I think I have a great deal to offer your program. In fact, my qualifications directly match the things you listed in your ad.

The next two-four paragraphs go through the job ad and address each qualification that is mentioned. Don't just say you are interested in a topic or that you know about it, but list your actual experiences with it. This could mean teaching experience, research experience, study group experience, professional development experiences, etc.

For instance, you indicate that you need someone who can teach undergraduates. For the past two years, I have been teaching undergraduates here at MSU. I teach TE 000, which focuses on issues of [student learning, student diversity, classroom management, etc]. The great thing about Michigan State's program is that it prepares teacher educators as well as teachers. In conjunction with my teaching assignment, I also enrolled in a course called TE 994, Teaching Practicum, in which all doctoral students studies the phenomenon of teacher learning and examined our own practices as novice teacher educators. This experience has prepared me very well for your position.

Notice that the letter also refers to any enclosed papers or articles that you are submitting. This helps the search committee to look at your papers in the context of your overall experiences and interests.

The best way to organize your presentation of yourself is to give them one paragraph on qualifications for each thing they list.

If you are weak on one of the areas they ask about, make a case for what you have done and show how you think you will eventually meet their criteria.

Be sure you tell them about the dissertation, whether or not it fits within their ad.

I notice that you also indicate an interest in someone who is interested in national standards. I have studied national standards in some of my courses, and in fact did an analysis comparing standards in four states and presented this analysis at the last meeting of the American Educational Research Association. A copy of this paper is enclosed here.

Your indicate in your ad that you also want someone who can work with other departments on campus. One of my duties for the past two years has been to serve as student representative on a cross-department review of teacher education curriculum policies. This experience has given me a strong sense for how teacher education fits into the larger university-wide curriculum and for the kinds of concerns faculty in other departments may have about teacher education courses.

You also indicate that you would like someone who has an established research program. I am in the process of establishing such a program. I have finished my dissertation and have already pulled two papers from it that I am submitting for publication. I am also in the process of developing a grant proposal for a study that would follow up on the dissertation findings. My goal is to have a follow-up study underway by the time I have completed my second year as an assistant professor.

The dissertation study, by the way, turned out to be fascinating. I started with the aim of trying to learn how interns interpret their internship experiences, and the extent to which they see their mentors and supervisors as gate-keepers or as genuine helpers. I focused on five interns and started following them each a month before they actually entered the field. . . . **Enclosed with this letter is a paper I wrote that summarizes these findings.**

If some important part of you doesn't fit into their ad, but still enhances your resume, find a way to bring it up anyway.

Give a summary statement of your application.

Incidentally, before joining the doctoral program at MSU, I spent three years teaching in Ghana. My experiences there have given me tremendous insights into international differences in education practices and education policies that I believe enhance both my teaching and my research. I look forward to finding ways to integrate that experience into my future teaching and research.

For all the reasons laid out above, I see myself as a strong candidate for your position and a good fit to your needs. I think after looking over the enclosed materials and reading letters from my references, that you will agree. The materials include my paper comparing state policies ("What are we aiming for?) and a paper based on my dissertation ("Teaching in the eye of the storm." Under separate cover, you should receive letters from Professors ABC, DEF, and GHI.

Thank you for considering this application. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Newly-minted PhD