



Writing an effective Master application letter

Dr. Graeme Blake

Zernike Institute for Advanced Materials

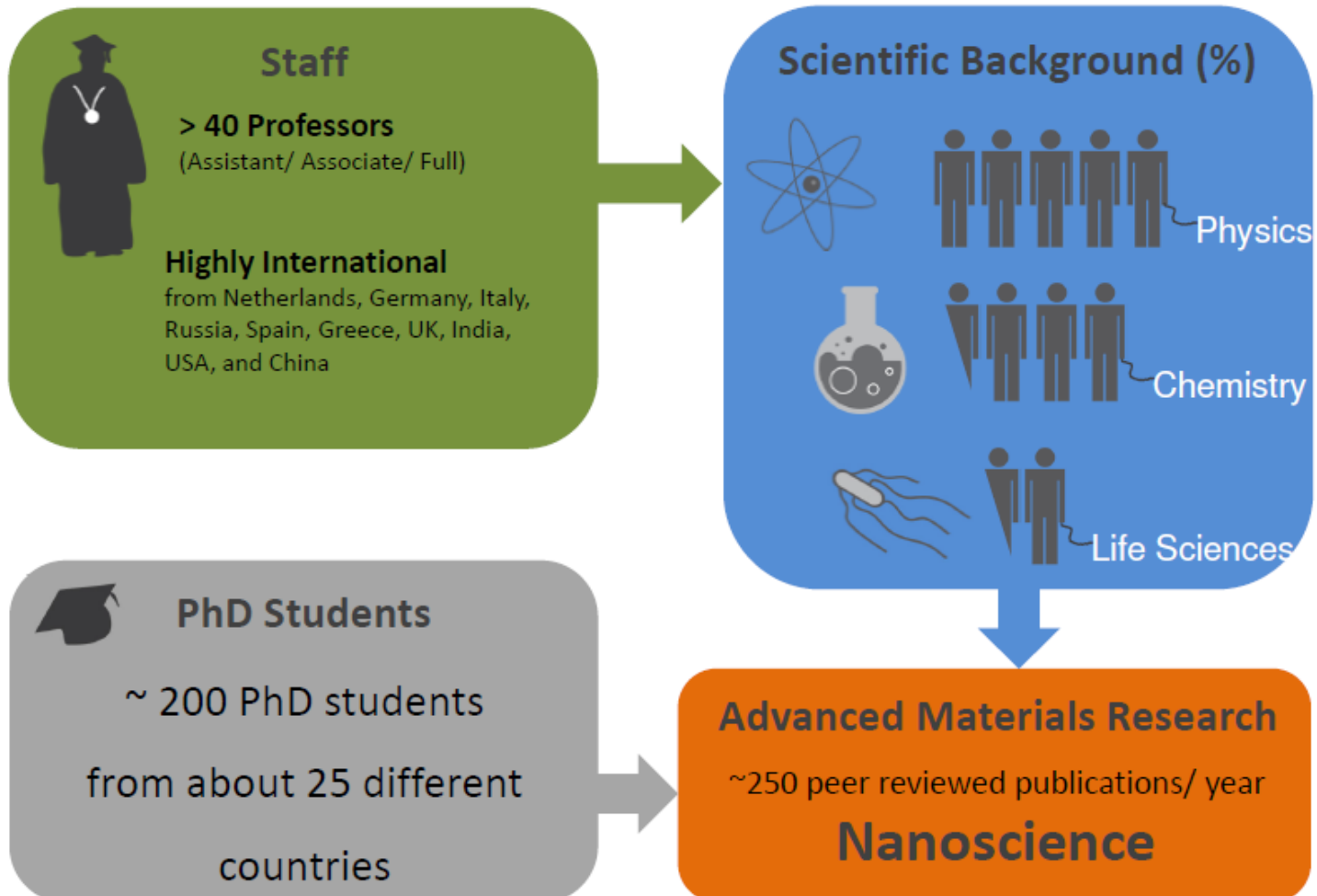
University of Groningen

The Netherlands



Zernike Institute for Advanced Materials

Staff & PhD students - working across the borders of disciplines





university of
 groningen

faculty of science
 and engineering

zernike institute for advanced
 materials

Top Master in Nanoscience, U. Groningen



university of groningen / faculty of science and engineering / zernike institute for advanced materials

Top Master Programme in Nanoscience

Keuzegids Masters
TOP RATED PROGRAMME
2018

2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018

Provided by Zernike Institute for Advanced Materials

Photos © Sylvia Germes





Outline

- What essential details should you include in your application letter?
- What should you not write in your application letter?
- Summary: what are the admissions committee looking for?



Before you apply

- Find out about both the university and the Master programme you are applying to (you need to show in your letter that you have good knowledge of them).
- Think about whether you have an appropriate academic background for the Master programme.
- Think about whether you can relate to the main activities, interests and philosophy of the institute hosting the programme.
- Contact Master students who are already in the programme for their views and experiences (also concerning the admissions process).



Essential elements of a cover letter

1. Brief introduction to yourself and your interests.
2. Previous background from your Bachelor studies – academic performance, involvement in student organizations
3. Experience with the subject area of the Master – acquired skills and knowledge, relevant achievements. Describe research or projects that you were involved in. Also describe work experience if relevant.
4. Why you are interested in your chosen Master and institute – personal reasons for applying. You should demonstrate that you know about the history and reputation of the study programme and institution.
5. Conclusion, politely hoping for a positive outcome.

You can find templates and examples online, but make your letter original!



General advice for the cover letter (1)

A number of aspects should be kept in mind when addressing the essential elements of the cover letter on the previous slide:

- Perhaps most importantly, explain why the specific university and Master programme are the right choice for you.
- Describe your strongest qualifications and achievements (relevant to the Master programme). These might already be on your CV – don't simply copy this information but expand on it.
- Give some relevant and interesting insights about yourself. Try to be both personal and original – try to stand out from the crowd!
- Your goal is to prove that you are the most suitable and motivated person to be chosen for the programme.



General advice for the cover letter (2)

- Explain how you learned about the Master programme.
- Honesty is always appreciated. If something on your CV could be interpreted negatively, try to explain.
- If you are re-applying after your application was rejected the previous year, make it clear why you are now a more suitable candidate than last year.
- You might want to explain how you made your choice of referees.
- The letter should look tidy and professional. Use the same font and consistent formatting throughout.

Take time to compose the application letter. Do not leave it until the last minute!



Things to avoid in a cover letter (1)

- **Do not fail to explain why you want to apply for that particular programme.**
- **Do not give the impression that you know little about the institute or programme you are applying to.**
- Do not exaggerate your achievements or be dishonest. None of the applicants have perfect CVs and the admissions committee know that there are only 24 hours in a day.
- Do not submit a letter with many spelling and grammar mistakes, or a letter that is formatted badly or carelessly. It does not have to be perfect, but remember that first impressions are important!
- Do not make the letter too long or too short. One to two pages are generally sufficient. You can refer to your CV for the list of relevant details.



Things to avoid in a cover letter (2)

- Do not simply restate what is in your CV or other application material. However, you can use the application letter to expand or explain something on your CV.
- Do not try to force humour. Sometimes it does not come across properly in writing.



What the admissions committee look for

- Good past academic performance and relevant experience.
- Motivation and enthusiasm for application to the particular programme. The committee wants committed and enthusiastic students!
- Evidence of potential to excel in the future. High grades are not everything!
- Evidence of potential to be creative.
- Individual character, interesting personality, honesty.

Your application letter is your chance to show that you have the qualities required!