



 **FITCHBURG STATE
UNIVERSITY**

NURSING

Resume & Cover Letter Guide

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This Guide is for You

In this guide you will find instructions and samples to assist you in crafting your resume and cover letter for your practicum and for professional positions after graduation. Having well crafted application materials is incredibly important when entering a competitive job market. You only get one chance to make a first impression, so make sure your resume and cover letter are helping your reader to understand what an amazing candidate you are.

In addition to this guide you can also utilize the Career Services and Advising Center for feedback on your materials, interview preparation, and job search support both while you are a student and up to 5 years after graduation. Simply email careercenter@fitchburgstate.edu or call 978-665-3151

What is the Purpose of a Resume?

A resume is often an organization's first impression of you. It should be used as a marketing tool to tell your story by presenting your skills, knowledge, and experience to a potential employer/practicum placement in a concise, easy-to-read way. The average employer spends only 15 to 20 seconds reviewing a resume. Your resume should be targeted at a specific organization/position, error-free and easy for a hiring manager to quickly skim and get an idea of your qualifications for a position.

There is not one perfect layout for your resume, but your practicum resume should be:

- Organized logically
- Easy to understand
- Consistent (spacing, formatting, font, use of bold/italics, etc.)
- One page limit

Avoid:

- **Pronouns:** Personal or possessive pronouns (I, my, me, we, our) are not necessary
- **Typos and spelling mistakes:** Spellcheck does not always catch typos. Have at least 2 other people proofread your resume.
- **Premade templates:** These can be rigid and difficult to alter to your specific needs.
- **Excessive graphic design:** Keep it simple, don't use unusual fonts, color, clipart, text boxes, etc.

What should you include in your Practicum Resume?

For your practicum resume there is a more rigid format you must follow to qualify for placement. Use the chart below and sample on the next page to craft your resume.

ESSENTIAL

- **Name and Contact Information:** First and Last name, address (just city/town and state), email, phone
- **Education:** Degree(s), GPA, significant awards, graduation date
- **Certifications:** BLS and other relevant certifications.
- **Clinical Experiences:** Clinical rotations, locations, dates
- **Job Experience:** Organization, position title, and date only (more in depth description for LPN to BSN students)
- **Volunteer Work/Leadership Roles**
- **Awards**
- **Language Fluency** (if applicable)

OPTIONAL

- **Professional Summary:** A professional summary is great for those with more experience (example: LPN to RN program).
- **Academic & Co-curricular Activities**
- **Awards**
- **Volunteer Experience:** If you have relevant volunteer experience, include it! Unrelated volunteer experience is optional
- **Unrelated Job Experience:** Depending on how much nursing/clinical experience you have you may want to add unrelated job experience to show transferable skills)

Student Name

Fitchburg State University, Senior Nursing Student
City, State
Phone # • FSU email address

Education

Fitchburg State University — Fitchburg, MA
Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Month/Year of Anticipated
Current GPA (optional)

Clinical Experiences

Community Health Rotation
Location, City, State

Semester/Year

Chronic Illness Rotation
Agency, City, State

Semester/Year

Continue list of Rotations
Location / City, State

Semester/Year

Employment

Company/Organization
Position

Month/Year to Month/Year

Volunteer Work/Leadership Roles

Where / What Role

Dates or Year(s)

Certifications

B.L.S., American Heart Association

Since (Year)

Awards

List any award(s) chronologically, most recent first

Date

Language Fluency

Can be removed if English is the only language

CRAFTING A COVER LETTER FOR YOUR PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE

Your practicum cover letter is uploaded to the statewide database of all clinical practicum sites with your resume. This means that the same letter will be seen by ALL potential clinical preceptors. Your cover letter will need to highlight your skills, strengths and experiences, but also be general enough to address all potential practicum sites. Your cover letter is an opportunity for you to stand out from other applicants and highlight experience and skills that set you apart.

Tips

- **Address your letter generally:** Write your letter “To whom it may concern.” Do not write your letter to a specific placement or person. You do not want to alienate potential hospitals/units. They will already have your ranked preferences of placements, do not include this in the cover letter.
- **Consider your areas of strength:** What do you feel sets you apart from other candidates? Do you excel in a fast paced environment? Are you especially good with geriatric patients? Do you have keen attention to detail? Highlight your greatest strengths and back them up with examples.
- **Use Specific Examples:** Don’t just state that you have experience, back it up with evidence! Don’t just repeat what you have on your resume, but rather elaborate on two or three key skills/experiences and describe how they directly relate to a practicum position
- **Keep Your Audience in Mind:** Focus on what YOU bring to the placement, not what you will get out of the experience. They know they will provide a great learning experience for you, describe how your skills and experience make you a great pick for this position.
- **Write Well and Proofread:** This is the first impression you make with your practicum site, so make sure you are using proper grammar, spelling, and coherent flow. If your cover letter is sloppy, they will assume this is a sample of how you work. You can also use the writing center in Academic Coaching and Tutoring for an extra proofread!
- **Do not overthink this!** It’s easy to get really in your head about professional language and trying to sound fancy that you use words that are not reflective of who you really are. You want to be professional and polished, but not sound like a robot.
- **Be brief:** Cover letters should be limited to one page, 3-4 paragraphs at most.

Cover Letter Format

Your Name

Date

To whom it may concern,

Opening Paragraph

In your first paragraph, introduce yourself and why you believe you would be a good fit for a practicum placement. Mention two or three skills or experiences that you believe set you apart.

Second Paragraph

Explain your background for the preceptor. Elaborate on which of your experiences have prepared you to excel in your practicum placement. Don’t just tell them about your skills: show them with specific examples. This could include how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate, clinical rotations, work or volunteer experience. Do not reiterate all the information that is on your resume, but rather focus on a few key points that highlight your skills/experience.

Closing Paragraph

Thank the reader for their consideration.

Indicate your desire for a meeting or interview and how they can contact you to follow up. Include your contact information (email and phone number).

Sincerely,

Your Name

PRACTICUM COVER LETTER EXAMPLES

Below are some cover letter examples. **DO NOT** use these as templates to change a few words around and submit as your own. Remember, your letter will be in a database of hundreds of nursing students with very similar experiences and qualifications. Your cover letter is your first impression and your only opportunity to stand out and highlight YOUR unique skills. Put some thought and effort into it!

Student Name

June 13, 2024

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my interest in a practicum position. I have worked in healthcare for the past 4 years with exposure to a variety of different patient environments. I have strong assessment skills and providing specific patient-centered care is one of my main values.

I have been a Certified Nursing Assistant since 2019, when I started working in a long term care facility. I possess strong patient communication skills, including extensive experience with multiple types of dementia presented in patients. I am able to put patients at ease. I worked throughout the intensity of the pandemic and I understand infection control, proper use of PPE, and crucial monitoring and reporting of changing patient conditions.

Most recently, I have worked at my community hospital where I am floated between med surg units, the emergency department, and the ICU. I work well in a care team as I perform blood glucose checks and vital signs utilizing critical thinking skills to connect results to conditions. After witnessing multiple code blues, I greatly appreciate the ability to think fast and efficiently during an emergency, and I provide the same level of care in these situations.

I am excited for the opportunity to bring my skills and experience to my practicum position. Thank you for your consideration and time, I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Student Name

Student Name

September 18, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a senior Nursing student at Fitchburg State University and I am excited to be applying to my senior practicum placement. I would be a fantastic addition to your team offering great bedside manner, critical thinking, and teamwork.

My healthcare education began in 2017 when I went to a vocational high school where I studied Health Occupation as a trade. I then obtained my CNA license in 2019 and started working at a nursing home and rehabilitation center. I am able to communicate and form relationships with not only patients, but family members as well. Creating open lines of communication based on trust decreases the anxiety of patients and families and leads to better outcomes. During my maternity rotation, I had the privilege of supporting a laboring mother and then assisting in the birth of her child. I helped the mother take each contraction one at a time and gave her many words of encouragement throughout the entire process.

In my position as a CNA at Heywood Hospital I have had the opportunity to develop important skills, including taking vital signs, blood glucose levels, toileting, and assisting with ADLS. While working in long term care and the hospital setting, I have gained many skills that I will continue to use throughout my nursing career, including patience, empathy, and teamwork. These experiences have benefited me and have helped me become a valuable member of the healthcare team.

I look forward to gaining valuable experience in this practicum and I am excited to incorporate all of my skills in the practicum experience. I want to thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Student Name

Student name

July 19, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a senior nursing student at Fitchburg State University. I am writing with the intention of obtaining a practicum placement for the upcoming semester. Throughout my years as both a nursing student and patient care technician, I have discovered my interest in critical care, trauma, cardiac, and pulmonary medicine. I am excited about a clinical rotation as it will allow me to expand my knowledge and understanding of the nursing field.

Throughout the past two years as a nursing student, I have worked at UMass Memorial Medical Center as a Patient Care Associate. The floor I started on had a diverse patient population. This allowed me to gain first-hand experience and knowledge about different treatments and disease processes, providing me exposure to tracheostomies, G-tubes, colostomies, nephrostomies, chest tubes, and wound care where I was able to connect my classroom education to my work. I have strong therapeutic communication skills and value empathy, kindness, and being supportive of my patients throughout their hospital stay. This includes taking the time to braid my patient's hair or discovering alternate methods of communication with an aphasic patient to find their favorite music. Additionally, this position allowed me to gain experience with the Epic charting system and telemetry.

This past summer, I transitioned from the medical-surgical setting to the intensive care unit. I am utilizing this opportunity to work beside nurses caring for more complex patients. I am assisting with providing daily care for intubated and sedated patients, those requiring invasive hemodynamic monitoring, those on numerous IV medications, and ventilators. This environment is ever changing and requires the ability to quickly adapt, a skill I would bring to my practicum.

Thank you for taking the time to read and review my application.

Sincerely,

Student Name

How is this different than your Practicum Resume?

Your professional resume is different from your practicum resume. In your professional resume you will add more in depth information about your skills and experience, including a more in depth description of your practicum experience and past jobs/volunteering especially if it is health related. Remember, all new RN grads will have completed similar clinical rotations. You should be highlighting what makes you different, and where you personally excel in knowledge/skills/experience. Keep your audience in mind; what do you want your potential employer to learn about you from this document? Now is your opportunity to let them know the amazing skills you would bring to the position.

Describe your experiences

Provide detail on each of your experiences that are related to the position you are applying to. This can include positions that have “transferable skills” like working as an RA and highlighting your leadership and communication skills or crisis management. Under each experience you should have bullet pointed “skills phrases” that:

Starts with an action verb

Highlights what you did and how you did it

Demonstrates the result and skill used

Example:

Action verb	skill used	what and how
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Demonstrated	attention to detail	<i>to initiate interventions such as intravenous, subcutaneous and intramuscular injections.</i>
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What should you include in your Professional Resume?

ESSENTIAL

- **Name and Contact Information:** First and last name, address, city, and state, email, phone
- **Education:** Degree(s), GPA, significant awards, graduation date
- **Licensure and Certifications:** If you have passed the NCLEX, include RN license and number. If you have not yet taken the NCLEX write “Eligible for NCLEX test for RN” and test date if known. Any other relevant certifications.
- **Clinical Practicum:** Include a robust description
- **Related Job Experience:** CNA positions, PCA jobs, etc.
- **Relevant Research:** Ex. honors research thesis/presentation

OPTIONAL

- **Professional Summary:** A professional summary is great for those with more experience (example: LPN to RN program).
- **Academic & Co-curricular Activities**
- **Awards**
- **Skills:** particularly language skills
- **Volunteer Experience:** include especially if relevant
- **Unrelated Job Experience:** Depending on how much nursing/clinical experience you have you may want to add unrelated job experience to show transferable skills

Recent Graduate, BSN
 Fitchburg, MA
 Phone # • email address

Professional Summary

NCLEX eligible BSN graduate with 6 years of clinical experience as a CNA skilled in building a strong rapport with patients through empathy and active listening and strong time management and organization skills from having to assist many patients at the same time through COVID-19 pandemic.

Education

Fitchburg State University, Fitchburg, MA May 2022
 Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Cum Laude GPA: 3.34

Licensure and Certifications

Eligible for NCLEX test for RN August 2022
 CPR-BLS, American Heart Association, Basic Life Support Expiration: 08/24
 Certified Nursing Assistant Course Expiration: 08/2022

Experience

Example Medical Center- Boston, MA **March 2022-April 2022**
Selected Nursing Practicum: Emergency Department

- Monitored and implemented care for deteriorating conditions of patients all ages
- Performed basic vital signs before procedures and monitored patient stability throughout the hospitalization for optimal results
- Initiated nursing interventions such as intravenous, subcutaneous and intramuscular injections
- Comforted patients and family members during emergent procedures such as intubation
- Worked with patients to educate on the importance of medication adherence and disease management.

Certified Nursing Assistant **February 2021- Present**

- Cared for an average of 15 patients per shift, assisting 3-5 nurses and doctors with a rapid influx of admission during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Routinely obtained and charted vital signs including blood sugar levels, as well as placed patients on telemetry monitor and performed EKGs

Sample Health Center - Townsville, MA **July 2018 - August 2020**
Certified Nursing Assistant

- Worked with patients with dementia
- Adapted to a surge of COVID-19+ patients during the peak of the pandemic, working overtime and implementing new care procedures to keep patients safe

Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center - City, MA **July 2016 - June 2018**
Certified Nursing Assistant

- Assisted up to 20+ patients per shift with basic ADL tasks including transferring patients into beds and wheelchairs using gait belts, mechanical lifts and other tools

Clinical Rotations

Greater Fitchburg Area Communities & Virtual Simulations Community Health	Fall 2021
Care Central VNA & Hospice-Gardener, MA& Virtual Simulations Chronic Illness	Fall 2021
UMASS University Campus- Worcester, MA Medical-Surgical II & Pediatric	Fall 2020, Spring 2021
UMASS Memorial Health- Worcester, MA Maternity	Spring 2021
UMASS Memorial Health- Leominster, MA Medical-Surgical I	Spring 2020
TaraVista Behavioral Health- Devens, MA Mental Health	Fall 2020

Student Sample, BSN
Fitchburg, MA
Phone # • email address

Education, Certifications, and Licensure

Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Fitchburg State University, Fitchburg, MA Honors Thesis: Title of Your Impressive Work	May 2022 GPA: 3.90
Eligible for NCLEX Exam for RN B.L.S., American Heart Association	Scheduled for August 25, 2022 Since 2019

Clinical Experience

UMass Memorial Medical Center-University Campus, Worcester, MA Clinical Practicum Rotation: MICU (150 hours)	Spring 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cared for post-operative patients, patients who were sedated and ventilated, and hemodynamically unstable patients• Demonstrated empathy and care for patients and families while providing excellent patient care• Started IVs, monitored patients' respiratory ventilation, pulse oximetry, assisted with intubation, and responded to all codes	
Greater Fitchburg Community Organizations <i>Community Health Rotation (?? hours)</i>	Fall 2021
Greater Fitchburg Area Home Care and Chronic Illness Agencies <i>Chronic Illness Rotation (?? hours)</i>	Fall 2021
UMass Memorial Medical Center-University Campus, Worcester, MA <i>Pediatric Rotation (?? hours)</i>	Spring 2021
UMass Memorial-Memorial Campus, Worcester, MA <i>Maternal Newborn Health Rotation (?? hours)</i>	Spring 2021
Saint Vincent Hospital, Worcester, MA <i>Mental Health Rotation and Med-Surg II Rotation (?? hours)</i>	Fall 2020
Emerson Hospital, Concord, MA <i>Med-Surg I Rotation (?? hours)</i>	Spring 2020

Employment

UMass Memorial Medical Center-University Campus, Worcester, MA <i>Patient Care Technician</i>	May 2021 - Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support care providers by ensuring patient needs are met and concerns/questions are addressed.• Ensure efficiency of care provision by gathering and distributing supplies and documents.	
Fitchburg State University, Fitchburg, MA <i>Nursing Peer Tutor</i>	May 2019 - Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provided group and individual tutoring for nursing courses and Anatomy and Physiology I and II	

Language Fluency

Spanish (native speaker)

Volunteer Work

Heywood Hospital Vaccine Clinic, Gardner, MA	March 2021
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LPN to BSN Example
Fitchburg, MA
Phone # • email address

Highly skilled nurse with five years of experience providing excellent care to critically ill patients in the fields of geriatrics, vent/trach, and dialysis.

Education

Fitchburg State University, Fitchburg, MA	May 2022
Bachelor of Science in Nursing	
Eligible for NCLEX test for RN	August 2022
Mount Wachusett Community College, Gardner, MA	December 2016
Certification: Practical Nursing	December 2016
Certified Nursing Assistant and Home Health Aide	2013

Experience

Selected Nursing Practicum: Telemetry Floor	March 2022-April 2022
UMass Memorial HealthAlliance - Clinton Hospital, Leominster Campus	

Monitored cardiac patients by assessing HR,BP,RR and interpreting telemetry strips. Assisted with medication administration. Documented appropriately in EPIC. Notified PCP of changes and requested orders as needed. Accompanied the RN when providing discharge instructions.

Licensed Practical Nurse	2020-Present
Private Home Care, Hardwick, MA	

Provide quality care to post stroke patients and assist geriatric patients to remain home. Medication management, VS, ROM exercise, aAdequate hHydration/mMeal preparing, medical appointment scheduling, housekeeping, Transportation with assistive devices to and from PCP appointments, actively respond appropriately to emergency situations upon occurrence.

Licensed Practical Nurse	2017 –Present
Federal Medical Center Devens, Devens, MA	

Provide high-quality care in the federal prison system. Triage, evaluate, treat, and educate inmates while working with providers. Responsible for the administration of medication through pill line and insulin line. Assist coworkers with treatment of a variety of patients including long term care, mental health, and dialysis.

Licensed Practical Nurse	2020-2021
Bear Mountain Health Care, Worcester, MA	

Prioritized and managed care for critically ill non-verbal and verbal patients. Effectively provided care for 12 patients per shift. Suctioned patients per protocol while assessing and reporting airway status to the respiratory team. Administered medication and feedings via G-tube while assessing for patency. Completed stoma and wound care continuously assessing for infection and notified the physician immediately of new or worsening symptoms.

Home Health Aide/ Certified Nursing Assistant	2013 – 2017
Epic Health Services, Shrewsbury, MA	

Assisted patients with ADL's, documented tasks performed through Call Wise.

CRAFTING A PROFESSIONAL COVER LETTER FOR A JOB

What is the Purpose of a Cover Letter?

Always include a cover letter with your application if you are able. It allows you to personalize your application, demonstrate how you are a great match for the position, lets you show your personality and passions, and serves as a writing sample. This can be a powerful tool especially when you are in an applicant pool of candidates with very similar qualifications and experiences. Use your cover letter to show them what you bring to the table and why you are a perfect match for what they are looking for!

Tips

Customize your Letter: Don't just send a generic letter with all your applications where you change the name of the company and position only. Employers can spot a form letter a mile away. This sends the message that you do not really care about the position.

Contact Information: Include the name, correct spelling, and job title of the person to whom you are writing. If it is not stated in the position or you are unable to identify the receiver, address the letter to "Hiring Manager."

Do Your Research: Know something about the company's products, services, mission, or values and reference this in your letter.

Keep Your Audience in Mind: Focus on what YOU can do for the EMPLOYER, not what you will get out of the experience. Describe how your skills and experience make you a great candidate for this position.

Use Specific Examples: Don't just state that you have experience, back it up with evidence! Don't just repeat what you have on your resume, but rather elaborate on two or three key skills/experiences and describe how they directly relate to the position you are applying to.

Align with the Job Description: Read the job description carefully. What is the employer looking for? Are they seeking someone with resilience? Someone who can work in a fast-paced environment? Provide an example of a time when you developed and demonstrated those traits.

Write Well and Proofread: Employers scrutinize the letter for proper grammar, spelling, style, and coherence of thought. If your cover letter is sloppy, they will assume this is a sample of how you work.

Use the Writing Center in the Academic Coaching and Tutoring Center (ACT) to make sure your document is free from mistakes and is well written and organized.

Do not overthink this! It's easy to get really in your head about professional language and trying to sound fancy that you use words that are not reflective of who you really are. You want to be professional and polished, but not sound like a robot.

Be brief! Cover letters should be limited to one page, 3-4 paragraphs at most.

Your Name

Date

Contact Name

Title and/or Department Organization

Name Street Address City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr. _____, Ms. _____, or Hiring Manager,

Opening Paragraph

In your first paragraph, attract the reader's attention. State your reasons for writing, indicating the position or type of work for which you are applying. State why you are interested in the position/employer/the field. Focus on something that sets this organization apart from similar employers and why that appeals to you. State why you are qualified for the role, i.e., what you can do for them.

Second Paragraph

Explain your background for the employer. Elaborate on which of your experiences have prepared you to meet the specific requirements of the position. Don't just tell them about your skills: show them with specific examples. This could include how your academic background makes you a qualified candidate, clinical rotations, work or volunteer experience. Do not reiterate all the information that is on your resume, but rather focus on a few key points that highlight how your skills/experience match up with what the employer is looking for.

Closing Paragraph

Indicate your desire for a meeting or interview and how they can contact you to follow up. Include your contact information (email and phone number). Thank the reader for their consideration and reiterate your enthusiasm for the position/company

Sincerely,

Your Name

There are many opportunities in nursing and you will be strongly recruited, but not all positions and organizations will be a good fit for you personally. Consider the following when deciding between different organizations and positions. Do your research before you apply, but you can also use your interview as an opportunity to assess whether this role or organization is the right fit for you.

When you research your potential employer consider the following:

- Who are they?
- What is the company culture like?
- What does the organization struggle with?
- What qualities are they looking for?

Research Online

Social platforms give a glimpse into an organization's culture or values:

- Review their Website including their mission statement and values.
- Check out social media posts (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.).
- Check out Google, do they have any google ratings? Have they been in the news lately, and for what?
- Look the company up on LinkedIn. Do you know someone who works there? Consider reaching out to ask about their experience.

Questions to consider asking in an interview:

- What type of lift equipment is used on the floor/unit?
- What supports are available to new grads if the agency does not have a new grad program?
- What is the culture of the agency and floor/unit?
- Do they offer an opportunity to shadow or observe before a candidate accepts a position?
- What is the hospital/agency's accreditation status?
- How is the safety of the staff addressed?
- What are the opportunities for professional development/skill development?

Remember, as you go through the application and interview process, you are not alone. Talk to your advisor or trusted faculty members and individuals you may know in the field. Also, Career Services and Advising is here to support you. Reach out to us if you would like to discuss the job search process, interview prep, do a mock interview, or discuss comparing offers and salary negotiation.

Email careercenter@fitchburgstate.edu or 978-665-4925.



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