



**Midlothian
Community
Action**

Midlothian Community Action (MCA) is a one stop shop for volunteers, community groups, charities, and social enterprises in Midlothian.

Top 10 Tips for Landing a Third Sector Internship

1. Write a Tailored Covering Letter

Read the job description carefully and explain why you are interested in that specific role and that specific organisation. Don't send the same letter to every employer.

2. Make Your Covering Letter a Proper Letter

A covering letter should usually be one page long.

A few lines in an email saying "please find my CV attached" rarely tells an employer enough about you. The strongest letters include one or two specific examples demonstrating how the applicant meets the essential requirements of the role. Don't just say you are organised or a good communicator - show us an example.

3. Don't Rely on AI to Write Your Letter or Emails

AI-generated covering letters sound generic and very similar to each other. Use your own voice and experiences. AI can help you structure your thoughts, but the content should be genuinely about you. We received multiple applications that used near identical sentences – this doesn't help us to assess your skills. Finally, if you are using AI, remember to remove the prompts before sending it to us...

4. Keep it neutral

Avoid saying too much about your personal political views, particularly party politics. Most third sector organisations work hard to remain politically neutral – we need to know that you will be able to do that. Working for third sector organisations and campaigning for rights, injustice and advocacy is a different type of activity.

5. Be Proud of Your Digital Skills

Many applicants underestimate how valuable their digital skills are. Experience with spreadsheets, social media, video conferencing, databases, websites, online collaboration tools, content creation, or AI tools can be a real asset in the workplace.



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6. Value Your Work and Volunteering Experience

Don't assume that part-time jobs are irrelevant. Every role teaches transferable skills that employers are looking for. You might have also gained work experience whilst volunteering, so make sure you mention this. Volunteering tells us a valuable story about your skills as well as your commitment.

7. Translate Experience into Skills

If you have worked in a bar, pub, café, shop, or customer service role, you have experience dealing with people, communicating effectively, staying calm under pressure, solving problems, and handling challenging situations. You are also likely to have followed instructions, worked as a team, and at times shown new members how to do a certain job. These are highly relevant skills in the third sector.

8. Focus Less on Your Dissertation and More on Practical Experience

Your academic studies are important, but for entry-level jobs employers are usually more interested in what you have done than what you have studied. Only discuss your dissertation content or academic projects if you can clearly explain how they relate to the job.

9. Prepare Examples Before the Interview

Most interviews include questions such as "Tell us about a time when..." Prepare several examples in advance that demonstrate teamwork, communication, problem-solving, leadership, and dealing with challenges. These are competency questions.

10. Choose the Best Examples

When answering competency questions:

- First choice: examples from volunteering or paid work in the third sector.
- Second choice: examples from private sector employment.
- Third choice: examples from university or college.

Real-world examples usually carry more weight because they show how you apply your skills in a practical setting.



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The most successful candidates don't necessarily have the most qualifications. They are the ones who clearly explain what they have done, what they learned, and how those experiences make them a good fit for the role.

A well-written covering letter, strong examples, and confidence in your existing skills will often set you apart from other applicants.