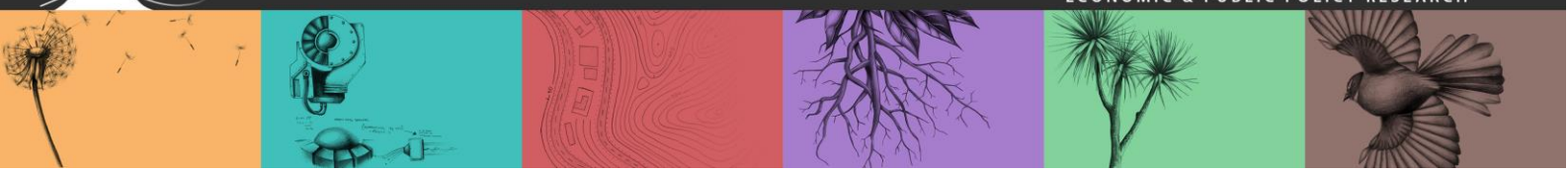


Hints on a great application for a research analyst position or internship at Motu from Isabelle Sin

Follow the instructions. Make sure you include the application form.

Proof read your application.

Get our name right. “Motu” is not an acronym and only the first letter is capitalised.

If you’re going to call me by my title, get it right.

Writing is important to us. Use your cover letter to demonstrate how well you write.

Include all your university transcripts with your application. Even if you have postgraduate qualifications, we want to see all your transcripts back to undergraduate study. Part of the reason is so we can see what courses you’ve taken and thus infer what knowledge you have and what your strengths might be. Part of the reason is because we care about your grades. Ability to do well in coursework is closely associated with ability to excel as a Motu RA or intern.

I appreciate a cover letter that is attached to the email, not written in it, because it’s easier to save to a file. Your email can be short, but should still be professional. An email that says “yo izi here’s my application” does not make a good impression.

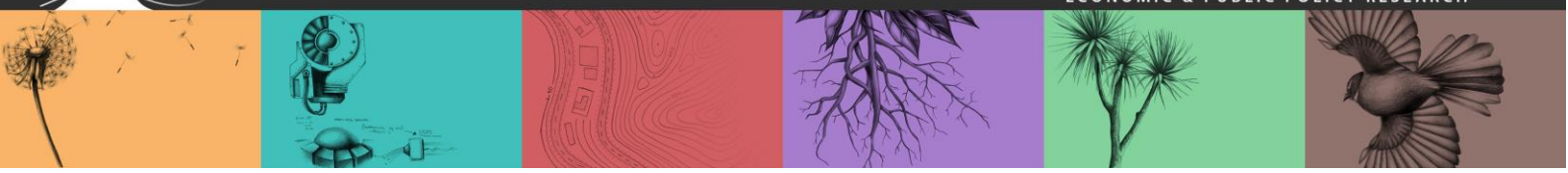
We’re particularly interested in applicants with strong grades in microeconomics, econometrics, mathematics, and statistics. We also often have RA work in our environmental economics programme, so it can be useful to point out if you’ve done well in an environmental economics course or have a particular interest in the area.

We do consider applications from non-standard applicants, but if your background is something other than economics don’t assume we’ll figure out why it’s relevant. Explain in your cover letter how your skills prepare you for the position and demonstrate that you can think like an economist.

We don’t expect new graduates to have relevant work experience, but it is a good sign if you’ve stuck with a student-type job for a good length of time.

We’re not impressed if you parrot back to us exactly what we say on our website. We know that we value high quality, impartial research. You should tell us why it matters to you.

It’s great to hear in your cover letter that you’re hard-working and interested in policy/research, but it doesn’t make you stand out. Use your cover letter to show



how you are different from all the other interested, hard-working applicants. For example, have you been to any economic seminars, read any economic research, or heard about economic issues in the news that caught your attention? We'd love to hear about the economic and policy questions that get you fired up and what you think about them.

We consider intern and RA positions as capacity development, training future NZ economists. Tell us how a Motu position will benefit you and your career as well as how hiring you will benefit us.

If you have questions about the application procedure or the position, do contact me by email or phone. Be professional and polite--I'm friendly. I also remember the people I've had pleasant interactions with.

Isabelle Sin, Fellow
Email: isabelle.sin@motu.org.nz