

GUIDELINES FOR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters must be in PDF format and signed by the recommender.

Tips and Guidelines for Students

Whom to Ask?

Letters of recommendation should come from professors or non-academic individuals who can write about significant contributions you are making to society outside of the classroom. Professors will be able to comment on your academic contributions to date, future goals, and research experience he/she has supervised. If you select a non-academic individual to write a letter of recommendation, be sure to select someone who is directly related to your contributions outside of the classroom. For example, if you are volunteering with a non-profit organization, it would be advisable to ask the director of the organization to write a letter of recommendation provided that the director can make first-hand comments about your contributions.

The writers may be faculty, administrators, internship/co-operative education supervisors, and employers, or others who can confidently discuss your potential for success in the Prep Médico program. You want someone who not only knows you sufficiently well, but who is willing to write you a strong letter.

Ask someone who...

- *knows you well enough to write with authority*
- *knows your work*
- *can describe your work positively*
- *knows your education and career goals*
- *can favorably compare you with your peers*

Note: letters from family, friends, political figures and the like are discouraged.

The ideal letter of recommendation comes from someone who knows you both in and beyond the classroom. Visiting professors during office hours is a great opportunity to build a relationship.

How to Ask

Remember that asking for a letter of recommendation is a very personal request. As such, you should make every effort to set up a face-to-face appointment with your recommenders. Try to avoid asking for a letter of recommendation by e-mail if at all possible.

Scheduling an in-person appointment has its advantages. First, you will be able to gauge whether or not your recommender is enthusiastic about writing you a letter. You should always ask whether or not they feel comfortable writing you a strong letter of recommendation. If you sense any hesitation on their part, or if they are in any way ambiguous in their reply, hear them out, thank them, and prepare yourself to find an alternative. Second, an in-person meeting allows you to articulate more thoroughly why you want to pursue a career in medicine and your future goals.

Timing

Recommenders always appreciate when you are considerate of their time. You should always give your recommenders ample time to write a letter for you: four to six weeks if at all possible. Remember that as the quarter progresses professors get increasingly busy and time constraints become more relevant. Ask early in the quarter so that you get the best possible letter.

Be Prepared

To assist your recommender and improve the strength and detail of the letter, give them a packet of information that includes as much of the following information as possible. Offering this packet to your recommender upon asking for a letter can also help them feel more comfortable accepting your request. Items to include:

- *Cover Letter*
- *Draft or condensed version of your statement of purpose*
- *Resume or curriculum vita (CV)*
- *Copy of a paper*
- *Transcript*

Remember to recognize the time and effort your recommenders put forth on your behalf by sending a handwritten thank-you note.

Guidelines for Writing Recommendations

Letter Requirements

The letter of recommendation should be no longer than 1-2 pages and include the following:

- Applicant's full name
- The length of time you have known the applicant and in what capacity
- Letters should be typewritten or word-processed – handwritten letters do not scan clearly.
- Letters should be on **OFFICIAL LETTERHEAD** and include identifying personal information: full name, title, institution, mailing address, telephone number and email address
- The **WRITER'S SIGNATURE** – please use blue or black ink as lighter colors do not scan well.
- Letters must be in **PDF format**.

We are looking for insight you, the letter writer, can give about this particular person, and especially seek your opinion in the following areas:

- **Intellectual readiness:** Include comments about general intelligence, the student's oral and written communication skills, ability to deal with complex and abstract ideas, evidence of being a lifelong independent learner. A letter that merely states the grade earned by an applicant in your class has very limited value.
- **Motivation for medicine:** If you have some knowledge of the student's experiences learning about medicine or experiences with volunteer work in a health care setting, comment on the applicant's exposure to the realities of medicine.
- **Maturity:** Your impressions of this person as someone who has the integrity and emotional maturity to take on responsibility. Do you think this student could discuss intimate or sensitive topics with a variety of people? Is this someone you would trust to care for you or a loved one?
- **Special attributes and assets:** Have you noticed the student often helps others in the hallway while waiting for class to start? Express your opinions and share any observations that illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of the student.