

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISING REQUEST FOR A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION



Applicant Name:

Letter deadline:

Princeton applicants to graduate health professional schools are supported by letters of evaluation from faculty, mentors, and others who know them in a professional context. The opinions of those who know the candidate well are essential.

Instructions to submit letters of evaluation

- Please submit your comments **on letterhead stationery bearing the date, your name, title, and contact information, and a signature** (typed/electronic is acceptable).
- Letters should be addressed to the general admissions body (e.g., “Dear Admissions Committee”).
- Letters should be written for the specific profession of interest; for applicants considering both MD and MD/PhD programs, we recommend two letters, one addressed to each.

Before writing your evaluation

- Think carefully about how well you know the individual asking for a reference. If, for any reason, you do not feel that you can write positively on an applicant’s behalf by their required deadline, be honest with them and decline to write the letter. A negative or vague letter can be detrimental to an applicant’s candidacy.
- Ask the applicant to provide you with a resume/CV, autobiography, examples of class work, or other materials that inform/remind you of their work with you. We encourage applicants to meet with writers to discuss their preparation and qualifications.

What to include in your evaluation

- Please indicate how long you have known the applicant and in what context.
- Provide reflections based on your direct experiences with the applicant. Specific information about attitude, character, motivation, maturity, professionalism, leadership ability, and unique contributions help to distinguish applicants.
- Medical schools are particularly interested in evidence that the applicant demonstrates certain competencies (described in more detail on the AAMC website: students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/core-competencies/):
 - Commitment to learning and growth
 - Teamwork and collaboration
 - Social and interpersonal skills
 - Scientific knowledge and scientific inquiry
 - Critical thinking and reasoning
 - Oral and written communication
 - Ethical responsibility to self and others
 - Reliability and dependability
 - Resilience and adaptability
 - Service orientation
 - Cultural awareness and cultural humility
 - Empathy and compassion
- In addition to discussing an applicant’s achievements, examples of how an applicant has overcome challenges and shown commitment to improvement are valuable.
- When possible and if you believe it to be in the applicant’s best interest, please rank them among other students you have known. Comments regarding their suitability and potential for their chosen health profession career are helpful.

Other logistics and deadlines

- It is acceptable for multiple individuals who have worked with students within the same context (e.g., two mentors in a research experience, a professor and a preceptor in a class) to co-write and co-sign one letter of

recommendation. An applicant may approach you asking for this type of letter, and it is at the recommenders' discretion to determine whether to write together or separately.

- You will receive an email request for your letter from hpaletters@princeton.edu. Please reply to this email and attach your letter. We then package and send to the letters to professional schools on behalf of applicants. Your letter will be included in its original form, without excerpt or change (save for spelling/typographical errors) to the admissions committees of health professional school programs.
- Per the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), applicants indicate whether or not they waive their right of access to read your letter. Schools prefer that applicants waive their right of access.
- A copy of the letter may also be used in support of the applicant's candidacy for prizes or awards for which they may be nominated, or for fellowships, grants or scholarships for which they may apply, at HPA's discretion. We will not release a letter for any other purpose. Please retain a copy of your letter should the applicant request it from you for other purposes (e.g., jobs, internships).
- Additional guidance may be found on our website: hpa.princeton.edu/application-process/info-for-recommenders

A note about deadlines. HPA uses your letters to prepare committee letters of recommendation beginning in early May. For individuals working with the applicant during the spring term, it may be in the best interest of the applicant for the letter to be received at the end of the term. Students are at their discretion to negotiate deadlines with recommenders. **Applicants whose letters are not received in a timely fashion are disadvantaged in the application process, so please make every effort to adhere to deadlines provided by the applicant.**

The Office of Health Professions Advising is aware of the substantial time commitment involved in writing letters of recommendation, and we would like to thank you for your efforts. As one of a group of letters written for the applicant, your letter is essential to the admissions process. A persuasive recommendation letter can significantly impact an applicant's candidacy during this competitive process. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns.

- Kate Fukawa-Connelly, director of health professions advising, 609.258.3144 or katef@princeton.edu.
- Main HPA office: 609.258.3144 or hpa@princeton.edu.