

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



Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Letter deadline: \_\_\_\_\_

Princeton students and alumni applying 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.

Your letter will be included in its entirety, without excerpt or change (save for spelling/typographical errors) to the admissions committees of health professional school programs – for this reason, we require letters to be sent on official letterhead and signed.

## Suggestions for letters of 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, 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, and/or other materials that better inform/remind you of their candidacy. Some evaluators choose to meet with applicants to discuss their qualifications, motivation for career, etc.
- Please indicate how you have come to know this individual. And, when possible and if you believe it to be in the best interest of the student, please rank the applicant among other students you have known.
- Comment on academic performance, attitude, character, motivation, leadership ability or special accomplishments of the above-named student. Comments regarding suitability for their chosen health profession career are helpful.
- In addition to academic abilities, medical schools are particularly interested in evidence that the applicant demonstrates the following competencies:
  - Ethical responsibility to self and others
  - Reliability and dependability
  - Resilience and adaptability
  - Capacity for improvement
  - Service orientation
  - Social and interpersonal skills
  - Cultural competence
  - Teamwork
  - Oral and written communication
- It is acceptable for individuals who have worked with students within the same context (e.g., two mentors in a research experience, a professor and preceptor in a class) to co-write and co-sign one letter of recommendation. A student may approach you asking for this type of letter and it is at the recommenders' discretion to determine whether to write together or separately.
- Per the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the veCollect service allows applicants to indicate whether or not they waive their right of access to read your letter. Schools prefer letters to be confidential.
- Additional guidelines may be found at <http://www.princeton.edu/hpa/applicants/letters/>

The competences are described in more detail on the AAMC website:

<https://www.aamc.org/download/351978/data/letters-printfriendly.pdf>

## Instructions to submit letters of evaluation

- Please submit your comments typed **in letter form, on letterhead stationery, bearing the date, your name, title and signature.**
- If the student is applying to medical/dental school this year, they may utilize the veCollect online system. You should receive an email from a service called veCollect on behalf of applicants. This secure, web-based system provides easy storage and organization of letters. You will receive an email from veCollect with specific instructions on how to submit your letter.
- Other health professions may have their own web-based recommendation portals – applicants should provide you with details.
- If the student is applying in a later year, or if you are unable to utilize veCollect:
  - On-campus evaluators may submit a copy of their letter in hard copy or as an email attachment sent from a Princeton email address to [hpa@princeton.edu](mailto:hpa@princeton.edu).
  - Off-campus evaluators must send a paper copy of their letter to the Health Professions Advising office.

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).

**A note about deadlines.** In general, HPA begins to evaluate candidates and prepare composite letters of recommendation in mid-May. For faculty working with the student on a spring semester endeavor, it may be in the best interest of the student 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 student.**

Thank you in advance for your support of this applicant and our program. Please do not hesitate to contact Health Professions Advising at 609.258.3144 or [hpa@princeton.edu](mailto:hpa@princeton.edu) with questions or concerns.