

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



Applicant 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.

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.**
- 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.
- Letters will be submitted through Interfolio. The applicant will provide you with instructions.

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, 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. Some evaluators choose to meet with applicants to discuss their qualifications, motivation for career, etc.

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, leadership ability, special accomplishments, and unique contributions help to distinguish applicants.
- Medical schools are particularly interested in evidence that the applicant demonstrates these competencies:
 - 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
 - Social and interpersonal skills
 - Cultural competence
 - Teamwork
- Examples of the ways that an applicant has overcome challenges and shown commitment to improvement are valuable.
- 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. Comments regarding their suitability and potential for their chosen health profession career are helpful.

The competencies are described in more detail on the AAMC website: students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/core-competencies/

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 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.
- 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 letters to be confidential.
- 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 begins to prepare composite letters of recommendation in early May and it is helpful to receive individual letters of recommendations by 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 on behalf of applicants, yours is essential to the admissions process. A persuasive recommendation letter can have a significant impact on an applicant's candidacy during this competitive process. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns.

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- Main HPA office: 609.258.3144 or hpa@princeton.edu.