

Guidelines for Writing a Letter of Recommendation

Your evaluation is a critical part of a student's application to medical, dental, other health professional schools, graduate schools, and for scholarship applications. It will not be used for prospective employment. The following guidelines, taken from AAMC, may be helpful to you in preparing a letter of evaluation for a health professions applicant.

1. Provide an accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability for medical/dental school, rather than advocate for the applicant.
2. Briefly explain your relationship with the applicant: how long you have known the applicant, in what capacity you have interacted, and whether you are writing based on direct or indirect observation.
3. Quality is more important than letter length. Focus on the applicant rather than details about the lab, course, assignment, job or institution.
4. Grades, GPA, and test scores are available in the application. **Only** provide information on those areas **if** you are providing context to help interpret them.
5. Focus on behaviors that you have observed directly when describing applicants' suitability for medical/dental school.
6. Comparative information can be helpful but must be put in context and given a rationale.
7. What do you see as the applicant's unique contribution to the incoming class of medical, dental (or other) students? Have they overcome obstacles and how did doing so contribute to new learning and growth?
8. How might the applicant contribute to diversity, broadly defined (background, attributes, experience, etc.), at a given school.
9. The [AAMC has defined 15 core competencies](#) necessary for success. Giving specific examples of strengths in any of these areas will be helpful: Critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, scientific inquiry, written communication, living systems, human behavior, service orientation, social skills, cultural competence, teamwork, oral communication, ethical responsibility to self and others, reliability and dependability, resilience and adaptability, capacity for improvement.

Practical information:

- Please type your letter on your departmental/office stationary. If that is not possible, please be sure to include your name and contact information.
- Please be sure your letter is dated
- Please be sure your letter contains the student's entire name
- Please be sure your letter includes your name, title and **signature**. **Please convert Word documents to a PDF** before emailing to hpo@dls.rutgers.edu (because signatures are frequently dropped from Word documents)
- In certain circumstances, it may be useful to write about a particular program to which the student is applying
- If possible, please include an Evaluation Form completed and signed by the student.
- Please submit the letter to the HPO via email(hpo@dls.rutgers.edu), campus mail, or fax.. Letters of recommendation are confidential. Therefore, students may only hand-carry letters if they have the permission of a HPO staff member and the seal of the envelope has been signed by the letter writer.