

Letters of Recommendation



Check Status

Once you request a letter, log onto the HPOdrome to make sure it has been received. The URL is: <https://hpodrome.rutgers.edu>.

Use your NetID or scarletmail username and password to gain access to your profile page. For security purposes, only those with an active Rutgers account can access the system. If you do not have an active Rutgers account, email the HPO to check on the status of your letters.



Electronic Recommendations are accepted if:

- They are typed on the author's departmental/office stationary or contain the author's typed name and contact information
- The letter is dated
- The letter contains the student's entire name and RUID #
- The letter contains the author's name, title, and signature; please note, some word processing programs drop signatures
- The electronic letter should be emailed as an attachment to hpo@dls.rutgers.edu



Why do I need letters of recommendation?

Students planning to apply to professional schools, in particular medical or dental school, will need letters of recommendation to support their applications. Letters of recommendation provide insight into students' academic performance, extracurricular activities, research experience, work experience, etc. We recommend that students have at least 5 letters of recommendation in their HPO file by the time they are ready to apply (typically at the end of junior or senior year). Build your collection over the time you are at Rutgers. Don't rely only on letters from your first two years and don't wait until the semester you are applying to ask for all of your letters. All letters must be confidential, be on the author's letterhead or contain the author's contact information, and be signed by the author.

Letters of Recommendation

Transfer Students

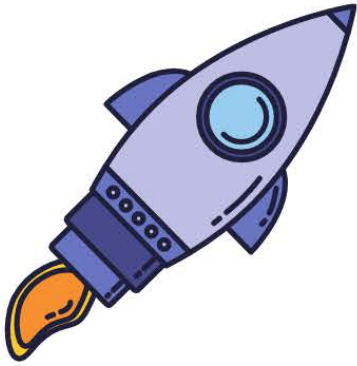
We will accept letters of recommendation from your previous institution outside of Rutgers. However, you should also collect at least 3 of the academic letters from Rutgers-New Brunswick faculty.



Rutgers is so Big. How do I Ask for Academic Letters?

Make an effort to connect to your teachers:

- Go to class regularly, be an active participant
- Speak with them after class so that they know who you are
- Go to office hours
- After the 1st exam let them know that you wish to request a letter at the end of the class, so they have the time to monitor your performance
- Prepare a one-page resume
- Ask for a meeting and come ready to discuss your goals and your resume. You should not hand the recommendation form to the instructor and simply leave, or worse yet, leave it in the instructor's mailbox.



Who do I ask?

You need academic letters and may ask teaching assistants and professors for those. As appropriate, you may also ask research supervisors, employment or volunteer supervisors, etc. By the time you are ready to apply, you should be sure to have letters from professors in your major. You should ask for letters from people who know you and have some specific ways to evaluate your qualities as an applicant to the programs to which you will apply. If you are undecided, wait to get letters of recommendation. There is no such thing as a universal letter of support. Competitive applicants will have letters that detail their strengths for medical, dental, or other specific programs.

Do I need to give my recommender a form and how do the letters get to my HPO folder?

Open a file at the Health Professions Office!

For health professional programs, there are two ways to handle letters of recommendation. For medical and dental school, letters are generally collected and stored over the time you are an undergraduate. When you are ready to apply, letters are selected and sent to the application service. If you have an HPO file, you have waived your right to see those letters, and we will select the best letters in your file to send.

We have Letter of Recommendation Request forms available in our office and on our website (under HPO Forms). These should only be used for letters supporting applications to medical, dental or podiatry schools. It is important that the front portion of the form be completed. The evaluator needs to know whether the Privacy Rights Waiver has been signed. Reviewers should be asked to submit a typed, signed statement on letterhead. Letters can be submitted via email, campus mail, regular mail, fax or in person. If a student is delivering a letter written on his or her behalf, it must be in a sealed envelope with the letter writer's signature across the seal. Letters are also accepted electronically via email (send to hpo@dls.rutgers.edu) as long as they are in a signed PDF file format. Students can ask faculty for letters at any time.

Most other health professions graduate programs only accept letters of recommendation through their application portal, examples include optometry (OPTOMCAS), public health (SOPHAS), physician assistant (CASPA), physical therapy (PTCAS), occupational therapy (OTCAS) and pharmacy (PHARMCAS). These forms are part of the application, and students ask for these letters at the time of application and should not have them sent to the HPO. Go to the professional program website and follow their instructions precisely.

Letters of Recommendation

Life sciences majors:

- 2 RU science letters from upper level major courses
- 1 RU non-science letter
- 2 additional letters

What letters should I have sent to my HPO file?

We recommend that you eventually have a minimum of 5 letters of recommendation in your HPO file by the time you are ready to apply.

Non Life sciences majors:

- 1 RU letter from your major
- 2 RU science Letters from your premed prerequisites
- 2 additional letters

A letter from a professional in the field adds to your packet. In some cases (such as Osteopathic Medicine) this letter is a requirement.

You should solicit letters that support your activities. If you do research, one from your mentor is required. If you perform, create, lead, participate in clubs, community outreach programs, or any other activity, get a letter from a leader or coordinator that supports your commitment.

When you are done you want to be able to use your letters to support the strengths of your application. I am a good student - here are my grades and letters from professors that agree. I am committed to (medicine/dentistry) and made my choice based on my volunteer and shadowing experiences, here is a letter from these experiences that supports me and predicts success. I love children and work with them in my free time, here is a letter from the Child Life Program at RWJ or your rescue squad, or your choir director, or your supervisor from work, research mentor, and so on. Medical and dental schools rely on these letters for personal insights. A good packet of letters is often what separates top candidates from their peers.

How do I release letters in my HPO file to professional schools?

The HPO has release forms for medical (MD & DO), dental, and graduate schools. The forms are available in our office in Nelson Labs A-207 and on our website (hpo.rutgers.edu) under HPO Forms. Completed forms may be hand delivered, mailed, emailed as pdfs, or faxed to our office. Once received, it may take a week or more for the release to be processed so please plan accordingly.