

University of Colorado at Boulder
Guidelines for Writing Letters of Recommendations
for Medical Schools and other Health Programs

Letters of recommendation/evaluation for students applying to medical, dental and other health professions schools are a significant factor in deciding whether they will be admitted. Recent information indicates that the letters may contribute as much as 25% to 50%, depending on the particular school, to the decision of whether to interview or accept a particular student.

We appreciate the fact that you are very busy and that writing letters is an additional demand on your valuable time. If circumstances prevent you from writing a professional evaluation within the time frame requested by the student, it is better to inform the student that you cannot write a letter.

Your letter will be especially effective if you use specific examples and instances wherever possible. The letters should address #1 and any of the other areas that you feel you can evaluate.

- 1) Describe your relationship to the applicant:** In what capacity have you known the applicant (i.e., employer, instructor, friend, relative), how well and for how long?
- 2) Personal characteristics:** How would you describe the applicant as a person? Comment on the applicant's maturity, emotional stability, problem-solving skills, tenacity in reaching goals, curiosity, creativity, common sense, capacity for leadership, self-discipline, adaptability, integrity.
- 3) Interpersonal skills:** How does she relate to others? Describe his capacity for collaborative work and attitudes toward supervision? How does she respond to criticism?
- 4) Potential in field of medicine:** How has he demonstrated his motivation for medicine? Describe her commitment to serving people. Do you believe he would make a good medical student/ colleague/professional? Has she demonstrated scientific curiosity?
- 5) Communication skills:** Assess the applicant's ability to communicate both verbally and in writing.
- 6) Intellectual ability and rank :** Faculty members should comment on the applicant as compared with other applicants you have known. Are you aware of extenuating circumstances that might account for any atypical grades?
- 7) Academic tasks:** Does the student follow through on assignments and pursue suggestions for additional work? How rigorous was his academic program? Comment on breadth of her academic choices. With what degree of independence has he worked?
- 8) Work/lab/volunteer/extracurricular activities:** Does she come to work/lab prepared? Would you trust him to work unsupervised? Describe her depth of involvement and achievement in these activities. Comment on his capacity for hard work.

Checklist:

- _____ Did you type the letter and print it out on letterhead?
- _____ Did you sign the letter?
- _____ Have you signed and attached the waiver of confidentiality form given to you by the applicant?

Please send the letter and attached waiver form to the address indicated on the waiver form. For questions, contact the student or our office (prepro@colorado.edu or 303-735-3000).