# Student Letter Requests: Guidelines & Template1

Letters offer departments a way to collect detailed, specific Student-Voice evidence about teaching. QTI offers the following for departments to adopt, adapt, or author:

* Letter-request template from department to student
* Guidelines for students to write the letter
  + Purpose statement/limitations of letter
  + Formatting suggestions
  + Honor statement
  + Content suggestions
* List of topics/prompts for students to consider as they write the letter.

NOTE: Some CU departments have received student letters with information better suited to an investigative process (e.g., regarding concerns about inappropriate behavior) rather than evaluation of teaching. Clarifying the purpose of the letter request and directing students to appropriate reporting channels may help address this potential outcome. QTI is consulting with the Office for Faculty Affairs for additional guidance on this matter.

1 Adapted from the MCEN Departmental Action Team (Jean Hertzberg, Daniel Knight, and Baowen Li) in partnership with the Teaching Quality Framework Initiative (TQF), which is supported by NSF (DUE-1725959), the Association of American Universities, and CU Boulder Colleges of Arts & Sciences and Engineering & Applied Science. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF or other funding sources. For more information about the Teaching Quality Framework, please visit our website: www.colorado.edu/teaching-quality-framework . See also http://teval.net/ for information about the broader NSF-funded multi-institutional teaching evaluation project.

2 These suggestions are adapted from the following sources, which may be helpful if you’d like further advice on writing your recommendation letter: “When your adviser wants a letter of support,” “ How I write tenure and promotion letters,” and “ How to write a support for tenure letter for my professor.”

These suggestions are adapted from the Teaching Quality Framework Assessment Rubric , CU Boulder’s Faculty Course Questionnaire, the MCEN Teaching Statement Self-Reflection Guide, and “Best Practices and Sample Questions for Course Evaluation Surveys.”

**Letter-Writing Guidelines for Students**

1. Length: between one-half page (minimum) to two pages (maximum).
2. Honor Statement: “I pledge the highest level of ethical principles in support of the department's academic excellence by upholding honesty and integrity in all my statements in this letter.” If you have concerns about appropriate professional behavior, please go to XXYY.colorado.edu to submit a report.
3. Identify who you are, how you know Professor XXX, and for how long.
4. State your support/lack of support for Professor XXX. For example, “I am pleased to strongly recommend Professor XXX for promotion to the position of [position title]” **or** “I respectfully do not recommend Professor XXX for promotion to the position of [position title].”
5. Describe memorable examples about Professor XXX’s teaching, advising, and/or mentoring.
6. Conclude with a clear restatement of your position.

**Possible Topics**

To support departments in collecting evidence that aligns with QTI domains, we have coded sample topics by color--Gold: Scholarly, Periwinkle: Inclusive, Light Purple: Goal Oriented. Departments should identify QTI domain topics about which they seek evidence; then, remove color coding before sharing with students.

**Classroom Activities**: Did Professor XXX’s teaching activities, content, materials, and/or their creative teaching techniques help you develop your knowledge, comprehension, conceptual understanding, and/or new skills? If so, how? If not, describe.

**Inclusivity**: Has Professor XXX enhanced your sense of belonging and created an inclusive, respectful environment in and outside of the classroom (e.g., team projects, advising)? Did you feel invited to immerse yourself in the content of this course? Did you observe that other students were also invited to immerse themselves in the content? Was student feedback welcomed and encouraged? Was feedback incorporated to improve the learning environment? If so, how? If not, describe.

**Mentoring**: (double coded) How has Professor XXX affected who you are as a student, your understanding of what you want to do after graduation, and your future career path?

**Out of Classroom Learning**: Did Professor XXX provide activities beyond the classroom-- guest lectures, attending industry/museum/field tours? What was the impact on you?

**Real World Applications**: Did Professor XXX offer opportunities to connect to real world applications? If so, how? If not, describe.

**Relevant Assessment**: Did Professor XXX’s teaching adequately prepare you for tests and/or other assessments? Did they answer questions in ways that helped you understand? Did feedback help you improve? If so, how? If not, describe.

**Research**: If you worked with Professor XXX on research projects, describe what you learned. Did they encourage you to explore different and challenging research projects?

# **Student-Letter Request Template**

Date

Dear Student,

As the representative of the YYYY department’s personnel committee, I am requesting your help to evaluate Professor XXX’s teaching and/or mentoring. Our department is considering the promotion of Associate Professor XXX to Full Professor. As part of our personnel review process, we seek *honest* feedback from current and former students about courses taught/supervised by Professor XXX.

Your statements will be used only for this review; are considered confidential under the policies of the University; and are not subject to disclosure under the Colorado Open Records Act, except as otherwise may be required by court order or by law. I therefore hope you will be candid in your comments.

This request is not a vehicle for submitting concerns regarding appropriate/ethical/responsible conduct on the part of instructors. If you wish to report concerns about appropriate professional behavior, please visit XXYY.colorado.edu.

We are especially interested in understanding

* Your learning experiences with Professor XXX--positive/not positive: please describe.
* If you observed Professor XXX make improvements as an educator, please describe.

In the attachment, you will find guidelines for writing your letter and topics which you can consider.

Please return your evaluation via e-mail (xxx@Colorado.Edu) by MMDDYYYY. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Personnel Committee Representative