

# Guidelines for Writing Letters of Recommendation

A Guide for Faculty  
Last Updated: June 2017

*\* Effective for ERAS 2016, all letters of recommendation must be uploaded by the LoR Author or his/her designee using the ERAS Letter of Recommendation Portal (LoRP). Medical schools will no longer be able to upload letters on your behalf.*

## Overview

Letters of Recommendation (LOR's) are an important part of a student's application. Residency programs use them to learn about a student's fund of knowledge, clinical judgment, communication and interpersonal skills and personal qualities. Equally important is what type of student s/he is and his/her potential as a resident. Along with clerkship grades and the interview, **LOR's are one of the most important factors programs use when selecting candidates.**

This page is intended for faculty writing LOR's for residency application, but may be useful for letter writers of LOR's for other purposes.

## Prerequisites

- You know the student
  - As a clinical faculty member (i.e. attending, clerkship director)
  - As a research advisor for research
  - LOR's from preclinical faculty (except for research advisors) or residents are not used for residency applications.
- You know the student well enough to write a supportive recommendation.
- Letters should be written on letterhead and signed.
  - LoR Authors complete their LoR; save it in PDF format with signature; and access the ERAS LoRP to upload letter.

## What information do you need from your student before writing a letter?

- An ERAS "Letter Request Form" that includes instructions for the Letter of Recommendation Portal (LoRP) as well as a unique identifier for each LoR you are asked to upload. Form can be printed from within MyERAS after enter letter writer's name into your application. A similar "[Sample Letter of Recommendation Request Form](#)" is available on the Career Advising website for those students applying for the SF or Military Match.
  - **Note:** *If an applicant waived his/her rights, they should not handle the completed letter*
- Have a discussion with the student:
  - Learn about their interests, residency plans and future goals
  - Should your letter be specialty specific (this candidate will be an excellent Ob/Gyn) or general (this candidate will be an excellent and hard working resident) or do you need to write two separate letters?
- You may want to request a student's:
  - CV
  - Personal statement (if available – usually completed in August of 4<sup>th</sup> year)
  - Transcripts
  - A photograph (to jog your memory if you haven't worked with the student in a while!)

- Early Match Programs (SF Match) and Military: the letter requirements for these programs are different. For SF Matching Program student will request letters be emailed, in an electronic PDF format, to Marie Hartman at [mhartman@drexelmed.edu](mailto:mhartman@drexelmed.edu). Instructions for Letters of Recommendation for the Military Match will vary by branch. The student must provide you with this information.

## Timing

- Tell the student when you will submit the LOR.
- You and the student should set the deadline together.
- Email the students once you have submitted the LOR.
- It is best to write a letter immediately after the student has completed your rotation.
  - Encourage students, especially 4<sup>th</sup> year Sub-I's, to let you know early on if they would like a letter from you.
  - You can offer to write a letter for an outstanding student, especially for 3<sup>rd</sup> years who may not be planning their applications yet. In this case, you need write and hold the letter until ERAS opens and the student can provide you with instructions.

## Content of a Letter

- It is important to include information appropriate to each unique student. The content should primarily focus on your personal experiences/assessments of a student during their clinical rotation or research experience with you.
- Use specific examples of behaviors you have observed to inform your recommendation
- We recommend meeting with a student before writing the LOR. Letters should include:
  - Your role/relationship with the student
  - How long and in what context you know the student
  - Details about student and student performance
- Potential topics
  - Student's potential in their field of interest
  - Professionalism
  - Interpersonal and leadership skills
  - Patient Interactions
  - Medical Knowledge
  - Passion for medicine or specialty
  - Personal Characteristics
  - Specialty Specific information

## Sample Format of a Letter of Recommendation:

**Address to:** Dear Program Director

### Opening

Include student name and AAMC ID#  
 Purpose of letter  
 Introduce Yourself  
 Nature and length of your relationship  
 Your experience in teaching (how often, how many students)  
 Include in your letter whether or not the student has waived his/her right to see this recommendation.

## Body

Share specific details about the student's academic performance

Fund of knowledge

Clinical skills

Personal qualities: reliability, hard-working, communications skills, empathy with patients and ability to work as part of medical team

Use specific examples

Compare the student with others that you have known

## Closing

Reiterate the strength of your overall recommendation

Would you recruit this person if you were a residency director? **Say so!**

**-Your signature**

## When to say No

- You do not know the student well enough
- You cannot write a strong or supportive letter
- The student's timeline is unreasonable for you and your schedule.
- You are too busy with other commitments
- Do not say yes if you cannot meet deadline. Missing LOR's or not having LOR's submitted on time can cost students their interviews.

## Where to Send LOR's

- All letters of recommendation must be uploaded by the LoR Author or his/her designee using the ERAS Letter of Recommendation Portal (LoRP).
- ERAS LoRP website <https://www.aamc.org/eras/lorp> . ERAS HelpDesk: contact by email [ERASLoRP@aamc.org](mailto:ERASLoRP@aamc.org) or by phone 202-862-6249.
- SF Matching Program letters should be emailed, in an electronic PDF format, to Marie Hartman at [mhartman@drexelmed.edu](mailto:mhartman@drexelmed.edu). Letters of recommendation for your preliminary year position should be processed through ERAS.
- Military letter instructions will vary by branch and will be provided by student. Letters of recommendation will either be mailed directly to residency program or uploaded into MODS system by the Office of Student Affairs & Career Advising.

## Tips

- Keep an electronic copy so that you can easily updated it in the future for other opportunities
- Do not reiterate the student's CV
- If you feel you cannot write a strong LOR for the student, please tell him/her so that they can find someone who can.
- Professional Letterhead: Please prepare LoRs utilizing professional letterhead. We encourage Drexel Med faculty at all clinical campuses to utilize stationary with the *Drexel University College of Medicine (DuCOM) letterhead* when writing LoRs for Drexel Med students. You may opt to use the DuCOM letterhead alone or in conjunction with your campus/institution letterhead.  
If you do not have the DuCOM letterhead, you can obtain it from your campus DME office or from our Division of Clinical Education.

- Signature: All letters should be signed by the LoR author.
- Faculty appointment: Drexel Med faculty at all clinical campuses should include their Drexel University College of Medicine faculty appointment (e.g. Clinical Assistant Professor of Pediatrics)
- LoR Review: Please carefully review your letter to assure accuracy of student

information prior to upload – especially the student's name, specialty and gender!

**References:**

AAMC Careers in Medicine Website

Anita D. Taylor, M.A. Ed., Associate Professor & Director of Career Advising,  
Oregon Health & Science SOM