

**HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HPAC)  
SKIDMORE COLLEGE**

**Letter of Recommendation form for Medical, Dental, or Veterinary School**

***To the Applicant:***

In addition to the last three pages of this document, that you will give directly to your letter writers, we have included some advice as you seek your letters of recommendation.

First off . . .

- Know that the individual letters of recommendation are sent along with the committee letter for medical school, vet school, and dental school. While the individual letters are sent first to the HPAC committee, they ultimately get bundled with the committee letter and are sent together to the schools to which you are applying.
- Presumably, you have been engaging in the kinds of activities that help to generate good letters (e.g., you have gotten to know your professors well and you have let your professors get to know you; you have conducted research and/or engaged in focused and/or in-depth extra/co-curricular activities, etc.)
- Discuss with your HPAC advisor how to go about identifying individuals whom you would like to write on your behalf (e.g., review the core competencies and try to identify letter writers who are best suited to speak to different types of competencies that you possess)
- Plan well in advance for seeking letters of recommendation for your files
- Don't automatically assume that someone will be able to write on their behalf
- Have back-ups
- Provide letter writers with all the pertinent information

Writers of letters of recommendation often are very appreciative of detailed information that will help the letter writer compose the strongest and most detailed letter possible.

You might consider including a cover letter similar to the one below.

*Sample Cover Letter*

**[Date]**

**[Recommender's Name, Title, Address]**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_.

*Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for \_\_\_\_\_ school on my behalf. I appreciate your willingness to take the time to help me in this important process.*

*To assist you, I have provided the following information:*

- *Resume*
- *Transcript*
- *Personal Statement*
- *List of the schools to which I am applying, including:*

- the person/committee to whom you should address the letter
- the address to where the letter should be sent (or information about web link)
- any specific recommendation requirements/guidelines for that school
- deadlines for the letter of recommendation
- (any other information that is necessary to include)
- General guidelines for preparing letters of recommendation

*Because you know me through . . . . I believe that you are in a good position to speak to my skills regarding . .*

**[Here, you can remind the letter writer of all the ways in which you have interacted with that person, and provide as much detail as possible to help jog her/his memory with specific information that could be included in the letter. Include reminders about how that letter writer knows you, relevant dates, specific tasks/activities that you engaged in under that person’s supervision, what your responsibilities were, etc. For example:]**

*Because you got to know me well when I shadowed you at Massachusetts General Hospital for three weeks (from 1/8/17 – 1/26/17, 7am -3pm daily), I believe that you are in a good position to speak directly to my passion for a profession in the health field, my work ethic, and my interpersonal skills in interacting with patients. Having the opportunity to round with you each day, to practice my skills in patient interviewing, to assist the residents in preparing to present their cases, and to discuss with you current issues in health care, was invaluable to me. What is most memorable for me was watching you manage conversations with patients and family members when you had to share news about poor prognoses. While those conversations were certainly very difficult, I was able to learn from you how to approach these conversations with a combination of compassion, candor, and information about next steps.*

*Because I took several classes with you during my undergraduate education (Research Methods and Advanced Research Methods), I believe that you are in a good position to speak directly to my scientific inquiry, quantitative reasoning, teamwork, and written communication competencies. In the Research Methods course (spring semester, 2016), you may recall that after I received a C+ on the first exam, I regularly attended your office hours for assistance; my perseverance and commitment paid off and I earned a B+ and A- on the next two exams in the course. With this stronger understanding of the quantitative methods, I was able to incorporate into my written final research proposal (on the effects of cannabinoids on working memory processing in mouse models) a sophisticated statistical plan for analyzing the data for the proposed experiments. You also commented in your feedback on my proposal that you found my writing to be clear, logically organized, and that I provided a compelling case for my hypotheses. In the Advanced Research Methods course the following semester, my lab group worked together to carry out this research study over the course of the semester. Although the collection of our data was delayed because of . . . . our team solved the problem by . . . and our results indicated that . . . . We were very proud of this work because . . . .*

*Thank you, again, for your help and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.*

*Sincerely,*

*. . . .*

**In addition to a cover letter (should you decide to include one), you must give to your recommenders the following three pages.**

**HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HPAC)  
SKIDMORE COLLEGE**

**Letter of Recommendation form for Medical, Dental, or Veterinary School**

**To the Applicant:** (Please fill out this top portion prior to giving this form to your reference)

Name of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Applying to (check):

Medical School \_\_\_\_\_ (M.D. Programs \_\_\_\_\_ D.O. Programs \_\_\_\_\_)

Dental School: \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinary School \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Recommender \_\_\_\_\_

Recommender's Address \_\_\_\_\_

**To the Applicant: You must check either (A) or (B) below.** *The Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 provides students with the right of access to educational records.*

\_\_\_\_ (A) *I hereby waive my right to examine this recommendation.*

\_\_\_\_ (B) *I retain my right to examine this recommendation.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Applicant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\*\*\*\*\*

**To the Recommender:**

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter on behalf of one of our Skidmore College students.

**PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR LETTER TO HPAC BY APRIL 17<sup>th</sup>.**

Please note that, in addition to going to the HPAC, **your individual letter will also be sent to the schools to which the student is applying.** After receiving all the student's individual letters of recommendation, the HPAC will write a committee letter on behalf of the student. The committee letters, *"provide an integrated and institutional perspective on an applicant's readiness for medical school. They provide a comprehensive evaluation of applicants based on direct observation and the synthesis of information provided by faculty and others at an institution"* (Association of American Medical Colleges [AAMC] Letter Writing Guidelines). **Your comments may be incorporated verbatim, or in a paraphrased form, into HPAC's committee letter of recommendation.**

**Please keep in mind the following AAMC\* (*italicized below*) and HPAC (non-italics) guidelines when preparing your letter:**

- Print on **institutional letterhead.**
- **Address letter to:** The Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC).
- Be sure to incorporate reference to **type of program** for which you are recommending the student (medical, dental, veterinary, etc.).

- *Provide an accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability for medical (dental, veterinary) school rather than advocate for the applicant.*
- *Briefly explain your relationship with the applicant: how long you have known the applicant; in what capacity you have interacted (e.g., faculty, pre-medical advisor, supervisor, etc.); and whether you are writing based on direct or indirect observations.*
- **Quality** is more important than letter length. Focus on the applicant rather than details about the lab, course, assignment, job or institution.
- **Only** include information on grades, GPA **if** you are providing context to help interpret them. Grades, and GPA are available within the application.
- Focus on behaviors that you have **observed directly** when describing applicants' suitability for medical school. Consider describing: the situation or context of the behavior; the actual behavior(s) you observed; any consequences of that behavior. (If you include any indirect observations, please make that clear in your letter.) Review the attached AAMC competency descriptions and incorporate into your letter information on those competencies to which you can speak directly.
- **Medical schools do not expect any one letter writer to provide information about every characteristic of an applicant.** In fact, they require multiple letters specifically because no one letter writer is expected to know everything about an applicant.
- Admissions committees and comparison information helpful. If you make comparisons, be sure to provide context. Include information about: the comparison group (e.g., students in a class you taught, students in your department, co-workers, etc.); your rationale for the comparison. If the applicant has been your student, it is helpful to have your comments on the student's academic performance, especially in comparison to others in the class or to other pre-health students you have previously recommended for medical school or other health profession programs. References to lab work, exam scores, and class participation are pertinent.
- The student will not have access to your letter if the student checked (A) above.

(\*AAMC guidelines retrieved from, <https://www.aamc.org/download/349990/data/lettersguidelinesbrochure.pdf>)

Recommender Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sign and attach this waiver form with your letter and e-mail it to [egrandy@skidmore.edu](mailto:egrandy@skidmore.edu) or mail to (if on-campus, interdepartmental mail is fine):

The Health Professions Advisory Committee  
 Skidmore College  
 815 North Broadway  
 Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

**PLEASE SUBMIT LETTERS BY APRIL 17<sup>th</sup>**



### **Pre-Professional Competencies**

- **Service Orientation:** *Demonstrates a desire to help others and sensitivity to others' needs and feelings; demonstrates a desire to alleviate others' distress; recognizes and acts on his/her responsibilities to society; locally, nationally, and globally.*
- **Social Skills:** *Demonstrates an awareness of others' needs, goals, feelings, and the ways that social and behavioral cues affect peoples' interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; treats others with respect.*
- **Cultural Competence:** *Demonstrates knowledge of socio-cultural factors that affect interactions and behaviors; shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity; recognizes and acts on the obligation to inform one's own judgment; engages diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work; recognizes and appropriately addresses bias in themselves and others; interacts effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.*
- **Teamwork:** *Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals; shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback; puts team goals ahead of individual goals.*
- **Oral Communication:** *Effectively conveys information to others using spoken words and sentences; listens effectively; recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed.*
- **Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others:** *Behaves in an honest and ethical manner; cultivates personal and academic integrity; adheres to ethical principles and follows rules and procedures; resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways; develops and demonstrates ethical and moral reasoning.*
- **Reliability and Dependability:** *Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for personal actions and performance.*
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** *Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations; recovers from setbacks.*
- **Capacity for Improvement:** *Sets goals for continuous improvement and for learning new concepts and skills; engages in reflective practice for improvement; solicits and responds appropriately to feedback.*

### **Thinking and Reasoning Competencies**

- **Critical Thinking:** *Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.*
- **Quantitative Reasoning:** *Applies quantitative reasoning and appropriate mathematics to describe or explain phenomena in the natural world.*
- **Scientific Inquiry:** *Applies knowledge of the scientific process to integrate and synthesize information, solve problems and formulate research questions and hypotheses; is facile in the language of the sciences and uses it to participate in the discourse of science and explain how scientific knowledge is discovered and validated.*
- **Written Communication:** *Effectively conveys information to others using written words and sentences.*

### **Science Competencies**

- **Living Systems:** *Applies knowledge and skill in the natural sciences to solve problems related to molecular and macro systems including biomolecules, molecules, cells, and organs.*
- **Human Behavior:** *Applies knowledge of the self, others, and social systems to solve problems related to the psychological, socio-cultural, and biological factors that influence health and well-being.*

Retrieved from, <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/core-competencies/>