



CLARION UNIVERSITY PRE-PROFESSIONAL COMMITTEE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION GUIDELINES

Greetings from the Clarion University Pre-Professional Committee for the Healing Arts! If you are receiving this, you have accepted the great responsibility of writing a letter of recommendation for _____, a current Clarion University of Pennsylvania student applying to professional and/or graduate school.

We are delighted that you have accepted this task. This letter could very well be the deciding factor for professional school admission committees, so we have put together a few guidelines as well as key areas of interest that these admissions committees are looking for to better distinguish this student from the rest.

Letter Writing Guidelines

Letter of recommendation writing can truly be a daunting task. The following guidelines are intended to help you think about your letter and facilitate the writing process. Professional and graduate 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.

The following guidelines aim to improve the letter writing process in order to benefit both letter writers and admissions committees. Please note that use of these guidelines is optional.

1. Provide an accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability for the professional program rather than advocate for the applicant.
2. 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.)
 - whether you are writing based on direct or indirect observations.
3. Quality is more important than letter length. Focus on the applicant rather than details about the lab, course, assignment, job or institution.
4. Only include information on grades, GPA or entrance exam scores (MCAT, PCAT, DAT, GRE, etc.) if you are providing context to help interpret them. Grades, GPA, and entrance exam scores have already been submitted to the program.
5. Focus on behaviors that you have observed directly when describing applicants' suitability for the professional school of interest. Consider describing:
 - The situation or context of the behavior
 - The actual behavior(s) or trait(s) you observed
 - Any outcomes of that situation
6. Admissions committees find 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 final comparison

Key Areas of Interest

The below areas are of particular interest to professional and graduate school admission committees. Please try to shape your letter in a way that addresses as many of these areas as possible, but only if they are applicable to the capacity in which you know the student and you are comfortable in discussing them.

A) Core, Entry-level Competencies

Describe how the applicant has, or has not, demonstrated any of the following competencies that are necessary for success in professional school.

- **Thinking & Reasoning Competencies:** Critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, scientific inquiry, and written communication.
- **Science Competencies:** Applied knowledge in living systems and human behavior, physical and chemical science aptitude, and any other scientific competencies.
- **Interpersonal Competencies:** Service orientation, social skills, cultural competence, teamwork, and oral communication.
- **Intrapersonal Competencies:** Ethical responsibility to self and others, reliability and dependability, resilience and adaptability, capacity for improvement.

B) Unique Contributions to the Incoming Class

Describe obstacles that the applicant had to overcome, and if applicable, how those obstacles led to new learning and growth.

Explain how the applicant may contribute to a professional school's diversity, broadly defined (e.g., background, attributes, experiences, etc.).

Note: If you write about any information that could be considered potentially sensitive, confirm with the applicant that s/he is comfortable with the inclusion of that information

A NOTE TO LETTER WRITERS

As a change to the application process, you WILL NOT be submitting this letter to the committee. Instead, you WILL be prompted by the student AND/OR the centralized application server (AMCAS, PharmCAS, etc.) with instructions or links to upload your letter. We certainly realize that your time is very valuable and important. However, we hope that you can take some of that time to help this student achieve his/her dreams of attending professional or graduate school. Please consider this request, as it would not be upon you if this student did not hold you in very high regard. Letters of recommendation can "make or break" an application, so please approach this responsibility with as much thought, importance, and respect as this student has for you. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,



Eric M. Lewis, Ph.D., Co-Chair
On behalf of the Pre-Professional Committee for the Healing Arts Clarion University of Pennsylvania