

## **Guidelines for Requesting Letters of Recommendation from your Professors for Grad School, Internships, Fellowships, or Jobs**

Getting into graduate school is not like getting into college. Master's and doctoral programs – especially the top ones – are extremely selective. Beyond good grades, GRE scores, and your statement or letter of intent, strong letters of support are extremely important. A generic letter of recommendation is immediately recognizable by readers on admission committees and is, frankly, the kiss of death. A letter of recommendation is unique – it describes accurately your strengths and skills and is tailored to the program or job to which you are applying. It is also well crafted and convincing. A strong letter of recommendation, then, is worth its weight in gold! Needless to say, such letters are not easy to write. The letter writer must have as much information about you as possible, including information about your career goals, any professional experience you have, the field and sub-fields that interest you, your personal strengths, and of course, your college career.

Before you submit your applications for entry to grad school or for a fellowship, internship or job, have someone look over your cover letter/statement and résumé. If the schools or employers are asking for a writing sample, you need to have someone go over your writing sample with a fine-toothed comb (to avoid submitting, say, a term paper riddled with typos and spelling mistakes). You are also encouraged to seek out your main professor (the one with whom you worked most closely – usually your senior thesis advisor) in advance of this letter request, to get advice on programs or jobs most appropriate to your areas of interest and level of skills and education, and for advice on developing a strategy for crafting your application. The bigger and more important the program or job, the more time and effort you will want to spend on the application.

**Because your professors want to write the most accurate, well-informed, and persuasive letter possible, we request the following:**

1. A **request** – in person (if possible) – for the letters of recommendation. A face-to-face (or zoom) meeting will allow us to gather lots of information directly from you to help us write a strong letter.
  
2. A **list of schools, programs or jobs** to which you will apply, with deadlines and addresses. Provide links to the appropriate program or job websites. The list should be assembled **in order of deadline**.

**ALL THIS FOUR WEEKS PRIOR TO THE FIRST DEADLINE!**

THEN....

## AT LEAST TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE FIRST DEADLINE....

3. Create a packet which will include separate files for each school. Each school file will include:

- Links to the program website, plus any additional info about the program.
- Any and all required forms for application or links to online forms.
- Name of person or committee to whom the letter should be addressed.
- Indicate if we are to send the letter by email directly to the school or employer, or if the school/employer will send us a link to upload our letters. If they want only a list of your referees at the time of application, make that clear to us as well.

4. In addition, your packet should include:

- Your letter of application or statement of intent that you will send out to the school or employer.
- An updated CV or résumé
- Your academic transcript (can be a copy, does not have to be “official”)
- A list of the courses you took with the professor from whom you are requesting the letter, indicating paper topic(s), paper grade(s), and your final grade(s).
- Your major (usually Art History), your minor, and your long-term career goals

To allow your professors time to fit in your letters of recommendation within our existing work schedules, you must contact your professor at least four weeks in advance of your first deadline (with a “heads-up” and a list of schools and deadlines – as above). Your professors/recommenders must receive all of the information above, in a single package, **two to four weeks before the first due date**. (Allow additional time over Christmas and other holidays.) Each professor will let you know about other specifics or personal deadlines. Requests for letters with less than two weeks’ notice tend not to be entertained, so plan ahead.

Please be aware that occasionally there are glitches when uploading to websites. Allow extra time before the deadlines for those cases.

Your professor will let you know, usually via email, once your letters have been sent.

Good luck with your applications!