

Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of recommendation can now be submitted through AMCAS and this is the preferred method. You may also utilize Virtual Eval and Interfolio. We accept letters by mail. Hard copies do take longer to process, so please keep this in mind. Below you will see the requirements for letters of recommendation to the VCU School of Medicine.

1. If your school has an established pre-medical committee, your letter must come from them. The Admissions Committee policy is that students who attend schools that have formal pre-med advisors or pre-med committees must have a letter from that advisor or committee. Failure to provide this letter can be considered grounds for not pursuing the file further or for evaluating the candidate as less competitive than others. The committee believes those students whose undergraduate institution provides such a service is better able to evaluate the candidate in the context of that schools entire applicant pool. They also believe that students who have not availed themselves of the service may be less well prepared for medical education than those who have participated.
2. If you are not using a pre-medical committee, we require three letters of recommendation--two from faculty who have taught you in the sciences who can speak of your academic abilities and one in an ancillary (minor) field. The third letter may also come from someone who has worked with you, preferably in a healthcare related area. Please review the end of this memo for details on each type of letter.

The purpose of submitting letters from science professors is to give the committee some sense about your academic ability and performance in the sciences. The Committee is interested in comments about your academics, about your skills as a participating member of the class and about your personal interactions with faculty. Letters are therefore reviewed by staff in the Admissions Office to be certain that the committee will find them useful. If you are notified that we have judged a letter as "non-science" it is usually because the writer did not address issues of your academic skills and abilities in scientific subject matter.

You are welcome to appeal decisions by the office about whether or not a letter is "science" but keep in mind that granting this appeal will not bind the committee in any way and they will make their decision without regard to the waiver. Committee members may decide against an interview based upon their inability to judge your scientific prowess.

The purpose of the "non-science" letters is to give the Admissions Committee the assessment of someone outside the sciences who may have excellent knowledge about you. Their letter should discuss your personal attributes. Non-science letters are most frequently from faculty outside the sciences, former employers, research mentors and academic advisors.

- 3. Information for Non-Traditional Candidates:** If you have done graduate work since graduating from undergraduate school, it is extremely important to include a letter from either the program director, your advisor or a faculty member who taught you in your graduate program.

If you have been out of undergraduate school long enough that you do not know faculty or the pre-med advisor, you may request a waiver of the requirement to have a committee letter. Under those circumstances the committee is comfortable with letters from those who have taught you recently as you prepared for your medical school application.

Information for MD/PhD Candidates: In addition to the three letters of recommendation or pre-medical committee packet requirement, the MD/PhD candidates must also submit an MD/PHD Reference Letter using the format provided on the Instructions/Forms page. The form must be completed by a person who is familiar with your research background and experience.

Lab / Research Project Recommendations Letters

Letters of recommendation from people who have supervised you in a lab / research project will be considered science recommenders only if the lab or research projects are in the "hard" sciences such as anatomy and neurosciences. Psychology and nutrition, for example, would not meet this requirement.