



Medical Professions Advisory Committee
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Dear Letter Writer,

Thank you for taking the time to write a letter of recommendation for our Wellesley student or alumna applying to a graduate program in the health professions. Admissions committees value your letter because you offer insights into the applicant that are not available elsewhere, and add considerable depth to the application. We will attach your letter in full to the committee letter written by the Wellesley Medical Professions Advisory Committee (MPAC). Please note that occasionally MPAC committee letters are shared with fellowship programs, scholarship applications and post-baccalaureate admissions offices as well.

All letters of recommendation must be on letterhead, dated, and signed. They are due by May 26.

Health Professions Advising collects our letters of recommendation for medical and dental schools via PrivateFolio. PrivateFolio is designed to make it easier for you to track letters requested and submitted. After you have agreed to write a letter of recommendation for an applicant, they will send you an email from PrivateFolio with a link to submit your letter. When you are ready to submit your letter of recommendation, click the "Upload Your Letter" link in the email. There's no need to create an account, simply select "respond" for the letter you are uploading and then upload. You can always go back into the system to see which letters you have submitted and which are outstanding. The applicant will be able to see that the letter is received and the Medical Professions Advising Committee will be able to access it. Applicants will not be able to access their letters, ensuring confidentiality.

Often letter writers ask us what information is helpful to admissions committees. The attached guideline from the Association of American Medical Colleges was developed to give writers an idea of the core competencies admissions committees seek in an applicant. Although this guideline was developed for medical school applicants, it translates well to any health professions school applicant. Please do not feel restricted by the guideline; the content of the letter is entirely at your discretion.

Thank you in advance for your time and effort on behalf of our Wellesley College applicants. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at: cseltzer@wellesley.edu or 781-283-3145.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Seltzer, Ed.D., MBA
Director of Health Professions Advising

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)
Guidelines for Writing a Letter of Evaluation for a Medical School Applicant

For the guidelines in their entirety, please follow this link:

<https://www.aamc.org/download/349990/data/lettersguidelinesbrochure.pdf>

The following guidelines aim to improve the letter writing process in order to benefit both letter writers and admissions committees. They are organized into two sections that describe: (1) **Tips** about how to write a letter and (2) **Key areas of interest** to medical schools.

How to Use the Guidelines:

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.

Tips About How to Write a Letter:

1. Provide an accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability for medical school rather than advocate for the applicant.
2. Briefly explain your relationship with the applicant: 1) How long you have known the applicant; 2) In what capacity you have interacted (e.g., faculty, pre-medical advisor, supervisor, etc.); and 3) 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 MCAT scores if you are providing context to help interpret them. Grades, GPA, and MCAT scores are available within the application.
5. Focus on behaviors that you have observed directly when describing applicants' suitability for medical school. Consider describing: 1) The situation or context of the behavior; 2) The actual behavior(s) you observed; and 3) Any consequences of that behavior.
6. Admissions committees find comparison information helpful. If you make comparisons, be sure to provide context. Include information about: 1) The comparison group (e.g., students in a class you taught, students in your department, co-workers, etc.), 2) Your rationale for the final comparison.

Key Areas of Interest:

A. 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 medical 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.

B. Core, Entry-level Competencies

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

Core Competencies for Entering Medical Students:

Professional Competencies

Commitment to Learning and Growth: Practices continuous personal and professional growth for improvement, including setting and communicating goals for learning and development; reflects on successes, challenges, and mistakes; pursues opportunities to improve knowledge and understanding; and asks for and incorporates feedback to learn and grow.

Cultural Awareness: Appreciates how historical, sociocultural, political, and economic factors affect others' interactions, behaviors, and well-being; values diversity; and demonstrates a desire to learn about different cultures, beliefs and values.

Cultural Humility: Seeks out and engages diverse and divergent perspectives with a desire to understand and a willingness to adjust one's mindset; understands a situation or idea from alternative viewpoints; reflects on one's values, beliefs, and identities and how they may affect others; reflects on and addresses bias in oneself and others; and fosters a supportive environment that values inclusivity.

Empathy and Compassion: Recognizes, understands, and acknowledges others' experiences, feelings, perspectives, and reactions to situations; is sensitive to others' needs and feelings; and demonstrates a desire to help others and alleviate others' distress.

Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others: Behaves with honesty and integrity; considers multiple and/or conflicting principles and values to inform decisions; adheres to ethical principles when carrying out professional obligations; resists pressure to engage in unethical behavior; and encourages others to behave honestly and ethically.

Interpersonal Skills: Demonstrates an awareness of how social and behavioral cues affect people's interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; recognizes and manages one's emotions and understands how emotions impact others or a situation; and treats others with dignity, courtesy and respect.

Oral Communication: Effectively conveys information to others using spoken words and sentences; actively listens to understand the meaning and intent behind what others say; and recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed.

Reliability and Dependability: Demonstrates accountability for performance and responsibilities to self and others; prioritizes and fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; and understands consequences of not fulfilling one's responsibilities to self and others.

Resilience and Adaptability: Perseveres in challenging, stressful, or ambiguous environments or situations by adjusting behavior or approach in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles, and recognizes and seeks help and support when needed; recovers from and reflects on setbacks; and balances personal well-being with responsibilities.

Service Orientation: Shows a commitment to something larger than oneself; demonstrates dedication to service and a commitment to making meaningful contributions that meet the needs of communities.

Teamwork and Collaboration: Collaborates with others to achieve shared goals and prioritizes shared goals; adjusts role between team member and leader based on one's own and others' expertise and experience; shares information with team members and encourages this behavior in others; and gives and accepts feedback to improve team.

Science Competencies

Human Behavior: Applies knowledge of the self, others, and social systems to solve problems related to the psychological, sociocultural, and biological factors that influence health and well-being.

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.

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.