

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

by Jenny Nguyen



PHARMACY SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS

1ST STEP

PharmCAS



3RD STEP

Interview



Supplemental
Application*

2ND STEP



Acceptance

4TH STEP



* some schools do not have supplemental applications

HOW MANY ARE REQUIRED?

RECOMMENDED

1. **Science Professor**
2. **Pharmacist/Healthcare Professional**
3. **Someone who knows you professionally**

Notes

- **not all schools require three letters or these specific ones**, but these should cover your bases for most pharmacy schools
- most schools **do not** allow letters from clergy, family, or friends
- PharmCAS allows a maximum of 4 letters



WHY DO SCHOOLS REQUIRE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION?

GOAL AND PURPOSE

- show schools that you have the intelligence, stamina, and drive to succeed in their rigorous program
- shows the aspects of your personality, ethics, and integrity that aren't seen anywhere else on the application



WHAT DO ADMISSION COMMITTEES EXPECT TO SEE?



1. The **validity of your claims** of academic excellence, professional success, and impeccable personal values
2. Your **specific qualifications**, including the depth of your academic and professional experiences
3. Your **unique traits that aren't covered anywhere else** in the application
4. Whether you **can accurately evaluate others and their perceptions of you**
5. Your demonstrated **commitment** to pursuing a medical/dental/pharmacy/etc. career

THREE IMPORTANT FEATURES IN A LOR



1ST

the evaluator knows the applicant's **intellectual ability** (intelligence, skills in learning and expressing ideas, interest in the subject)



2ND

the evaluator knows the applicant well enough to comment on **personality traits** (dependability, integrity, temperament, initiative, strengths and weaknesses)



3RD

the evaluator not only provides their overall assessment of the applicant, but also includes enough **supporting detail** to support their assessment

WHO SHOULD YOU ASK FOR A LOR?

- someone who can write you a **strong** letter of recommendation
 - ◆ someone you have a **personal relationship** with and have known for an extended period of time
 - ◆ can talk about your character, performance, and how these translate into being a pharmacist



WHEN SHOULD YOU ASK FOR A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION?



- at least three months before PharmCAS opens in July
- create a personal deadline for when you want them to finish their letter of recommendation
- ex. I asked in April and requested to submit by August 1st, since I wanted to apply to schools by then

HOW SHOULD YOU ASK FOR A LOR?

- in person > phone call or email*
- ask for a strong and positive letter of recommendation*
 - ◆ if they cannot, ask someone else
- if and when they say yes, give them the Letter of Recommendation Packet

*not all writers may agree with this



WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION PACKET



- Picture & Personal Blurb
- Important Dates and Deadlines
- Application Cycle: A Timeline
- Evaluators
- PharmCAS Likert Criteria
- Letter of Recommendation Structure
- Personal Essay
- Resume/Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Handwritten Thank You Letter

LOR PACKET CONTENT EXAMPLES

01 IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES
concise reminders

02 APPLICATION CYCLE TIMELINE
explains where you may be in the process

03 EVALUATORS
brief to-do list

04 PHARMCAS LIKERT CRITERIA
lists what they'll be asked to evaluate you on

05 STRUCTURE
sample structure of LOR for the evaluators

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

→ **July 14th, 2020: PharmCAS opens**

- ◆ Please expect an email from noreply@pharmcas.org with the subject. "Student Reference PharmCAS" around this time. I will be contacting you to ensure that PharmCAS has sent you the appropriate request email.

→ **August 1st, 2020: Letter of Recommendation Submission**

- ◆ Please submit your letter of recommendation by this date! Because one of the schools that I am applying to have rolling admission, it is important that PharmCAS is submitted as soon as possible to ensure the highest chance of entry.

APPLICATION CYCLE TIMELINE

→ **July 14th, 2020: PharmCAS opens**

- ◆ PharmCAS is a centralized application service that is used to apply to multiple Pharm. D. programs offered by schools and colleges of pharmacy.

→ **July 14th, 2020: Filling out PharmCAS**

- ◆ When PharmCAS opens, I will be asked to input the following: personal information, academic history, personal statement, and information about my evaluators (Letter of Recommendation writers). Evaluators will then complete a two-part process.

→ **Early - Mid August: Submission of PharmCAS**

→ **October - February: Pharmacy School Interviews**

→ **2-3 Weeks Post-Interview: Pharmacy School Acceptances/Rejections**

EVALUATORS

Evaluators (letters writers) must submit evaluations (a.k.a. letters of recommendation) to PharmCAS online through the “Letters by Liaison” Evaluator Portal. Evaluators will complete a two-part process:

- **Part 1: Complete questions and evaluation ratings through the Evaluator Portal**
 - ◆ Evaluators must complete and update a profile section with their contact information in case a program needs to communicate with them
 - ◆ Evaluators must complete a ranking system to evaluate the applicant on multiple criteria
- **Part 2: Upload Letter of Recommendation through the Evaluator Portal**
 - ◆ Accepted formats are .pdf, .doc, .rtf, or .txt
 - ◆ Since all evaluations are sent to every school you designate, evaluators should avoid referring to any specific pharmacy school or individual in the letter

PHARMCAS LIKERT CRITERIA

Applicants will be evaluated using the Likert Analysis, which contains the following criteria:

- **Oral Communication:** speaks clearly with precision, accuracy, and without ambiguity
- **Written Communication:** writing is precise, accurate, grammatically correct, and unambiguous
- **Leadership:** takes initiative and motivates others
- **Ethics:** displays honesty, integrity, and ethical behaviors
- **Empathy:** is considerate, sensitive, and tactful in response to others
- **Reliability:** is dependable, responsible, prompt, and thorough
- **Judgment:** displays critical thinking skills, common sense, and decisiveness
- **Interpersonal Relations:** is able to get along well with peers and superiors
- **Adaptability:** reacts well to stress and is poised and controlled
- **Professional Appearance:** maintains good hygiene, wears appropriate attire, and is well-groomed

SAMPLE LOR STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

- Who they are
- Their qualifications



BODY

- How does the recommender know the applicant
- Demonstration of skills with specific examples
 - ◆ Pharmacy Technician demonstrates:
 - Empathy
 - Communication
- How the applicant translates to being a future pharmacist
 - ◆ If the recommender believes the applicant will be good
- Areas for future growth/weaknesses

CONCLUSION

- If they recommend the applicant
- Contact information



PHARMCAS LOGISTICS

- Send the request email as soon as PharmCAS becomes available
 - ◆ Notify your letter writers to look out for the email from PharmCAS
 - ◆ There's a resend reminder option
- PharmCAS only accepts electronic letters submitted through their portal
- Waive your right to see the letter!



WHAT COMES AFTER THE LETTERS ARE SUBMITTED?



DON'T STOP THERE!

- Give them a thank you card
 - ◆ Handwritten is nice!
- Give them a personal gift
- Keep them updated
 - ◆ Where you get interviews
 - ◆ Where you get accepted
 - ◆ Where you decide to attend

HELPFUL TIPS/NOTES

FROM MY LETTER WRITERS

- if a student has **not** worked closely with someone for at least six months, it is not reasonable to expect a good letter. They might still get one, but they can't expect it
- be genuine and sincere!
- specifically asking for a **strong** letter: some agree but some do not
- LOR packets are helpful!
- it's ok to ask professors to write you a letter after the class ends, rather than when applying

FROM APPLICANTS

- **START EARLY**
- give your writers at least **three** months
- make it easier for them, tell them what to expect
- get to know them, talk about your future goals
- follow up with them
- make a timeline to stay on track

THANK YOU!

Questions?

BYE!



