

# Letters of Recommendation Guide for Faculty

Dear VCOM faculty,

Effective summer of 2016, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) revised the process for writing letters of recommendation to accompany medical students' applications to residency. All letters of recommendation must now be uploaded by you or your designee using the Electronic Residency Application Services (ERAS) Letter of Recommendation Portal (LoRP). VCOM will no longer be able to upload letters on your behalf.

We realize this is a change in how things have historically been done and we would like to provide you with the following information as you prepare to write letters on behalf of applicants. Please note, it is highly recommended that letters be submitted by:

**July 15 for osteopathic applications and by September 15 of the year a student is applying.**

## ERAS instructions

- We recommend writing letters immediately following a student's rotation; however, these letters must be kept by the individual letter writer.
- Letters can only be uploaded once the ERAS system opens in May of the year the student is applying to residency.
- At that time, applicants will provide you with a Letter Request Form that includes instructions for the LoRP as well as a unique identifier for each LoR you are asked to upload.
- If you do not already have an account, you will be asked to create one in order to gain access to the LoRP.
- Account creation is simple and only requires your name and email address. (All the technical specifications for letters can be found on the AAMC website <https://www.aamc.org/eras/lorp>.)
- Please do not send letters to VCOM. Letters cannot be stored at VCOM and will have to be returned.

## Additional Instructions for format:

- Include the student's AAMC number on your letter
- Please sign the letter and include your contact information.
- Please scan and save as a PDF for uploading to ERAS

More information is available on the AAMC website <https://www.aamc.org/eras/lorp>. If you have additional questions in the meantime, please contact the ERAS HelpDesk by email [ERASLoRP@aamc.org](mailto:ERASLoRP@aamc.org) or by phone 202-862-6249. Your VCOM Department Chair is also available to assist if you have any further questions.

Thank you very much for your support of VCOM students!

## Writing Letters of Recommendation for Residency

Thank you for supporting VCOM medical students' application for residency! You will be able to upload your LOR in May of the year the student is applying to residency. If a student requests a letter from you before this time, we suggest that you draft the letter soon after the student completes his/her rotation. This will enable you to include specific examples of their performance and ensure a thorough and comprehensive evaluation.

You may also be asked by a student for a letter of recommendation for whom you do not know well or are unsure if you can write a compelling letter. When this occurs, please explain to the student that you will be unable to write a persuasive letter and ask the student to speak with another instructor

### Guidelines for letter writing\*

- **Limit your letter to one or two pages but it should be longer than a paragraph**
- **Explain your professional relationship with the applicant**  
Do you know this applicant from an academic, clinical, or research setting? State how long have you known the applicant and how well.
- **Personalize your letter.**  
Include a personal assessment of the student's strengths, preferably from working together. Specific areas to comment on may include: intellectual ability, capacity for independent work, analytical skills, attitude toward learning, communication skills, initiative, persistence, and professionalism.
- **Provide specific examples.**  
Include specific examples of your observation of the student that reflect his/her potential as a future physician, professionalism, clinical acumen, interpersonal and leadership skills, passion for medicine, etc.
- **Avoid personal remarks.**  
Do not mention age, race/ethnicity, marital status, children, physical characteristics, or other personal attributes. If you believe this is an important factor in demonstrating the applicant's performance and potential, ask the student if he or she wants that information included in the letter.
- **Conclude with an overall recommendation.**  
Indicate how well qualified the student is for residency and as a future physician. Comment on whether you would select this applicant for a residency program.
- **State your availability for requests for additional information:** Include your contact information if it is not already included on the letterhead.
- **Carefully proofread your letter.** Pay particular attention to the spelling of the applicant's name. If you are using a template, ensure that you have changed the name throughout the letter.

\*Guidelines adapted from Gross Davis B. Writing Letters of Recommendation. In: *Tools for Teaching* (1993). 1st Ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; 1993  
*Please note, a second edition of this text was published in 2009. Once received, I will revise and update the recommendations accordingly*

## Power Adjectives for Letters of Recommendation

<b>Intellect</b>	<b>Work Ethic</b>	<b>Temperament</b>	<b>Vigor</b>
Adaptable	Accountable	Adventurous	Active
Analytical	Alert	Affable	Accurate
Astute	Attentive	Articulate	Ambitious
Bright	Businesslike	Assertive	Certain
Discerning	Committed	Assured	Conscientious
Far-sighted	Confident	Bold	Diligent
Good knowledge	Dedicated	Calm	Eager
Imaginative	Dependable	Compassionate	Energetic
Imaginative	Determined	Composed	Enterprising
Inquisitive	Devoted	Considerate	Enthusiastic
Inquisitive	Driven	Eager	Fast
Insightful	Efficient	Earnest	Independent
Intellectual	Ethical	Empathetic	Industrious
Intelligent	Flexible	Enthusiastic	Methodical
Judicious	Hard-working	Frank	Motivated
Knowledgeable	Integrity	Friendly	On-the-ball
Logical	Methodical	Good-natured	Organized
Original	Orderly	Gregarious	Outstanding
Perceptive	Perseverant	Humorous	Pace-setting
Resourceful	Persevering	Kind	Productive
Self-reliant	Persistent	Likeable	Reliable
Skilled	Precise	Open	Resourceful
Thoughtful	Prompt	Outgoing	Self-driving
Well-read	Punctual	Patient	Self-starting
	Resolute	Personable	Speedy
	Responsible	Pleasant	Systematic
	Serious	Polished	Tactful
	Sure	Restrained	Vigorous
	Tenacious	Sociable	Willingness
	Thorough	Spirited	Zealous
		Steady	
		Team-oriented	
		Tolerant	
		Trustworthy	