

Information and Instructions for Students Seeking Letters of Recommendation

Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education The University of Georgia

Introduction

The department's faculty will be pleased to help you in any way we can while you are applying to graduate schools, including writing letters of recommendation for you, if we feel that we know you well enough to be able to say something meaningful about you and your abilities. Most professors have their own specific requests or policies with respect to writing letters of recommendation, so be sure to follow those specific requests; some faculty members, for example, prefer that you have taken a class with them, so they know more about you and your abilities. The information in this handout is general information that is meant to make things a little bit easier for all of us (including you!).

General Procedures

You will gather the application materials and instructions that you need directly from the colleges or programs that interest you. Read each program's instructions very carefully. Most programs will ask you to provide three letters of recommendation from professors or other people who have some way to judge whether you will be a successful graduate student. Sometimes you are to collect all the letters and then send them with your application to the school to which you are applying. Sometimes the people who write your letters will send them directly to the schools to which you are applying. Either way, if you are asking any of the faculty members in the Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education to write letters for you, we ask you to follow these procedures.

1. Use the form labeled "Student Request for Letters of Recommendation for Graduate School Applications," which I am going to call the "Department form." One copy of it is attached in this packet. You may photocopy as many more for yourself as you need.
2. Fill out one Department form for each person who has agreed to write letters for you. Please note that you must mark the pieces of information you will allow each letter-writer to disclose in his or her letter at the bottom of this form, and you must sign the bottom of this form (because privacy laws otherwise don't allow letter-writers to tell anybody this kind of information about you).
3. Prepare a large manila envelope for each person who has agreed to write letters for you. Each envelope will include the following:
 - a. One copy of the Department form, with one copy of your resume attached.
 - b. Any other information or forms that the particular letter-writer has asked you to provide.
 - c. A list of all the schools to which you would like that person to send letters on your behalf, including each school's application deadline date.
 - d. All of the recommendation forms, for schools that have provided you with a specific form.
 - Fill out everything you possibly can on each form, including your name and address and intended major and so on.
 - Attach (paper clip) a stamped, addressed, self-sealing (not the kind your letter writers have to lick; they do too many to have to lick each one!) envelope to each form.
 - The envelope is addressed to the school you are applying to, or addressed to yourself, depending on that school's instructions. If it is addressed to yourself, write the name of the school on the outside of the envelope, so you will know what to do with it when you get it in the mail in a few weeks.

- e. A stamped, addressed, self-sealing envelope, with a note paper-clipped to it that says “Univ. of Wherever does not have a form; please write a letter” for each school that does not provide you with a specific form. If the school requests your letter-writers to include certain information, please photocopy that request and use it as the thing that you paper clip to the stamped envelope for that school.
4. Triple check that your envelope has everything. Then put it in the appropriate faculty member’s mailbox in the department office (516 Aderhold).

Questions and Answers

Whom should I ask to write letters for me? Will they say yes?

Ideally, you should ask professors or instructors who have had enough interaction or experience with you and with your work that they have some way to judge whether you will be successful in graduate school and as a professional. Employers are often also a good choice, depending on the nature of the work. Clinicians whom you have observed may also be a good choice, again, depending on how much that clinician knows about your abilities as a scholar. There is no advantage to asking the Department Head or other persons with “fancier titles” unless you have actually worked with that person.

The person you ask will most likely say yes. Faculty members, especially, recognize that it is part of our job to write letters of recommendation (and we need people to write letters about us all the time, too). Be aware, though, that different professors have different definitions of what it means to know someone “well enough” to be able to write a letter of recommendation, and different professors also have different policies about whether they will write letters for students when they would not be able to write honestly a very strong recommendation. Because of these differences, you should ask potential letter-writers whether or not they are willing to write for you. If you are prepared to hear the answer, an even better question is “I was wondering whether you felt you could write a strongly positive letter of recommendation for me.”

When should I ask for letters? When do I give my letter-writers the materials?

The unwritten rule is that you give people at least a month, or that you give them your materials at least a month before your earliest deadline date. Effectively, this means that you need to give your materials to the faculty members by the end of November or the first of December, because you will probably have some deadlines in early January.

What do I do if I think of another school after I’ve given my materials to my letter-writers?

In general, this shouldn’t happen, because you will have done all your research ahead of time and put together one big manila envelope for each letter-writer with all of your forms. If you do discover that there is one more school to which you simply must apply, ask your letter-writers if they can do another letter for you.

How will I know when my letters have been mailed?

You will know that your letters have been mailed when you get the ones that are addressed to you back in the mail. If it turns out that you are not applying to any schools that ask you to collect all the letters, you may enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard in the big manila envelope that you give to each letter-writer. Write a note to yourself on it, like “Dr. Bothe mailed this when she sent out my letters,” and then you will receive that postcard in the mail when your letters have been sent. (Please trust us on this one; there’s no need to check in every few days and ask if we’ve done your letters.)

The University of Georgia
Department of Communication Sciences and Special Education

Student Request for Letters of Recommendation for Graduate School Applications

Students: SEE THE SEPARATE INSTRUCTIONS SHEET

Student name: _____

Student current address: _____

Student local phone: _____ Email: _____

Phone during semester break (during end of December): _____

Letters of recommendation requested from _____

GRE Total	GRE Verbal	GRE Quantitative	Estimated GPA in Major Classes

Courses you have taken from this faculty member:

Course	Semester	Grade

Other experiences or interactions you have completed with this faculty member (remind us of everything):

Please attach a copy of your resume, if you have one. If you do not have a formal resume, attach a list of your activities and experiences that you believe would be relevant for someone writing a letter of recommendation on your behalf.

Permission to Release Education Record Information

I, _____ give permission for _____
Student Name: First Middle Last (please print) Faculty Member Name

to release the following education record information (check all that apply):

GRE Total GRE Verbal GRE Quantitative Overall GPA Major GPA Class Ranking
 None of the above

to the following universities:

for the purpose of writing letter(s) of recommendation for my graduate school application.

Student Signature

Date