

INFORMATION FOR EVALUATORS

The Health Pre-Professional Advising Committee is designed to aid undergraduate students at Penn State preparing an application to medical, dental, podiatry, and optometry schools. The committee is comprised of prehealth advisers, faculty and staff from across the university, as well as currently working or retired physicians.

What is the letter packet?

We submit a collection of letters of support from appropriate faculty and others with direct knowledge of the applicant's competencies for admission to a health professions program. The individual letters of recommendation are accompanied by a cover letter from our office and submitted as a packet to the health professions programs.

Importance of the individual letters of evaluation:

These letters are a critical component of an applicant's candidacy, as they help to inform the admissions committees of their competency to perform as a future healthcare professional. Candidates cannot apply to these programs without at least three letters of support. We encourage evaluators to respond to a request for a letter honestly and as quickly as possible to allow applicants the chance to arrange a letter packet early. As their candidacy so heavily relies on these letters of evaluation, we encourage evaluators to make every effort to write a letter if they agree to do so. If, in the event that a letter can no longer be written, we encourage evaluators to inform the applicant as early as possible to allow them an opportunity to solicit an additional letter from a new evaluator.

Timeline:

We typically suggest that students give evaluators, at minimum, 2 months notice when requesting a letter of evaluation. Early applications are a strategic advantage for health professional applicants, and therefore we suggest students have primary applications submitted within the first month that applications open.

However, it is incumbent on the applicant to ensure timely delivery of letters of evaluation. We understand that evaluators have busy schedules, and encourage them to be honest regarding timelines and your willingness to submit letters on their behalf. To schedule a comprehensive interview, students need 3 letters of evaluation submitted to our office and a health professions portfolio completed. Interviews begin in early spring and continue through August.

Guidance for writing a letter of evaluation:

In adherence with standards of ethical practice, it is highly recommended that students obtain confidential letters of evaluation and waive their right to view their letters. It is also recommended that students obtain letters from evaluators that are free of conflict of interest. To increase confidence in a candidate's letters, evaluators are encouraged to submit letters of recommendation on official letterhead and sign the letter. Evaluators may address the letters to the "Members of the Admissions Committee".

We encourage students to obtain letters from evaluators that can speak to their strengths that were directly observable. You are encouraged to provide specific examples as well as honest assessment of the candidate.

Examples of directly observable traits that health professional programs seek through letters of evaluation can include, but are not limited to the following:

Professionalism
Maturity
Leadership
Independence
Reliability
Perseverance
Self-discipline

Social Intelligence
Intellectual Curiosity
Adaptability
Enthusiasm
Empathy
Communicative Skills
Emotional Intelligence

Interpersonal Skills
Manual Dexterity
Ethical Responsibility
Motivation
Service-Orientation
Capacity for Improvement
Cultural Competence

You can review the list of core competencies expected of entering medical students by visiting the Association of American Medical Colleges website: <https://www.staging.aamc.org/initiatives/admissionsinitiative/competencies/>

VECOLLECT: HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR LETTER OF EVALUATION

Letters of evaluation must be submitted in one of the following file formats:

- ✓ .pdf
- ✓ .doc
- ✓ .docx

Our health professions office utilizes a service called veCollect. Evaluators will submit their letters via e-mail, and candidates will be able to track and monitor (but not view) their letters of evaluation electronically.

When a candidate chooses to e-mail requests to evaluators through the system, you will receive an e-mail with the following title: “[veCollect.] Request for evaluation from (Student Name)”

You have 3 options to submit your letter of evaluation:

- ✓ Click on the unique link listed to reply to the e-mail and attach your letter in the correct file format.
- ✓ Reply to the message and attach the letter in the correct file format.
- ✓ Copy and paste the link into the “TO” field of an e-mail message and attach the letter to that message.

Each e-mail request you receive will contain a unique link and e-mail for that student. Therefore, it is imperative that you respond to the correct e-mail link for each candidate that requests a letter of evaluation.

What if I attached the wrong document, or want to replace the one I submitted?

You simply need to send another e-mail, using any one of the 3 options, with the correct or updated document attached. veCollect will automatically upload the most recent attachment.

What happens after I submit my letter of evaluation?

There will be a 1-3 day delay before your letter is uploaded to veCollect. veCollect screens all letters. When it has successfully uploaded, you will receive an e-mail notification that it has been uploaded. At that point, candidates will be able to see that the letter has been received when they log in, though they will not be able to read or download the contents of the letter.

Will I be able to view the letter when it is uploaded?

No. We encourage you to communicate with the applicant and let them know when you have received confirmation that the letter was uploaded. If you have additional questions or concerns, you can call the Prehealth Advising Office at 814-865-7620 or 814-863-3889.

What if I have trouble submitting the letter?

Please email your letter to prehealthadvising@psu.edu to be uploaded manually by a member of our team.

Contact Information:
Prehealth Advising
East Wing, 225 Ritenour Bldg
University Park, PA 16802
Tel: 814-865-7620 or 814-863-3889