



Health Professions Program

Carnegie Mellon University
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Dear Recommender,

Thank you for your time and effort in writing a letter of recommendation for one of our students or alumni. Times have changed and so have what health professions programs hope to see in letters of recommendation. Below are some useful suggestions to assist you in generating a strong and supportive letter. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns about an applicant or your letter.

In writing your letter, please:

- use a salutation “Dear Admissions”
- write your letter on letterhead (*if possible*)
- sign your letter (**required**)

Useful guidelines:

- Briefly introduce yourself and your relationship with the applicant - mention how long and in what capacity you have known and interacted with the applicant.
- Quality is more important than length: focus on the applicant!
- Only include information on grades or QPA if you provide context to help interpret them.
- Comparison information is helpful. If you make comparisons, please provide context.
- Consider discussing unique aspects of an applicant’s life experiences, such as:
 - obstacles overcome and how those challenges led to new learning and growth,
 - how the student will enhance diversity and inclusivity
- In describing an applicant’s suitability for a health professions school, focus on behaviors that you have observed directly. Contrasting strengths and weaknesses is welcomed.
- Avoid writing a narrative of the applicant’s resume.
- If you taught the applicant, please limit the descriptive detail of the course and focus on emphasizing the applicant’s ability to grasp course content and apply their knowledge.
- **IMPORTANT**: Health professions programs such as medical schools are seeking applicants who will contribute to and enrich the incoming class. To help you prepare your letter, please review and discuss any of the Core Competencies listed on the next page.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason D'Antonio".

Jason D'Antonio, PhD

Director, Health Professions Program

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Core Competencies

(Adapted from the Association of American Medical Colleges)

Specifically for medical schools, the Core Competencies are used to evaluate an applicant's readiness for medical training. As you draft your letter, consider how the applicant has developed or demonstrated any of the following competencies, in addition to attributes such as integrity, emotional maturity, commitment, ability to take criticism, and honesty. For more details about these competencies or to read descriptions of what each competency entails, visit [AAMC Competencies](#).

Thinking & Reasoning:

- Critical Thinking
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Scientific Inquiry
- Written Communication

Science:

- Living Systems
- Human Behavior

Professional:

- Commitment to Learning & Growth
- Cultural Awareness
- Cultural Humility
- Empathy & Compassion
- Ethical Responsibility to Self & Others
- Interpersonal Skills
- Oral Communication
- Reliability and Dependability
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Service Orientation
- Teamwork & Collaboration

Link to read about the AAMC Competencies: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/real-stories-demonstrating-premed-competencies/premed-competencies-entering-medical-students>