

AAMC Guidelines for Writing a Letter of Evaluation for a Medical School Applicant

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of evaluation for a medical school applicant!

The following guidelines aim to improve the letter writing process in order to benefit both letter writers and admissions committees. They are organized into two sections that describe (1) **tips about how to write a letter** and (2) **key areas of interest to medical schools**.

How to use the guidelines

Please note that use of these guidelines is optional. They are intended to help you think about your letter and facilitate the writing process.

Medical schools do not expect any one letter writer to provide information about every characteristic of an applicant. In fact, they require multiple letters specifically because no one letter writer is expected to know everything about an applicant.

Guidelines

1. Provide an accurate assessment of the applicant's suitability for medical school rather than advocate for the applicant.
2. Briefly explain your relationship with the applicant;
 - how long you have known the applicant;
 - in what capacity you have interacted (e.g. faculty, pre-medical advisor, supervisor, etc.); and
 - whether you are writing based on direct or indirect observations.
3. Quality is more important than letter length. Focus on the applicant rather than details about the lab, course, assignment, job or institution.
4. **Only** include information on grades, GPA, or MCAT *if* you are providing context to help interpret them. Grades, GPA and MCAT scores are available within the application.
5. Focus on behaviors that you have observed directly when describing applicants' suitability for medical school. Consider describing:
 - The situation or context of the behavior
 - The actual behavior(s) you observed
 - Any consequences of that behavior.
6. Admissions committees find comparison information helpful. If you make comparisons, be sure to provide context. Include information about:
 - the comparison group (e.g., students in a class you taught, students in your department, co-workers, etc.)
 - your rationale for the final comparison

Key Areas of Interest

A.) Unique Contributions to the Incoming Class

-Describe obstacles that the applicant had to overcome, and if applicable, how those obstacles led to new learning and growth.

-Explain how the applicant may contribute to a medical school's diversity, broadly defined (e.g. background, attributes, experiences, etc.)

Note: if you write about any information that could be considered potentially sensitive, confirm with the applicant that s/he is comfortable with the inclusion of that information.

B.) Core, Entry-level Competencies

Describe how the applicant has, or has not, demonstrated **any** of the following competencies that are necessary for success in medical school:

Thinking and Reasoning Competencies

Critical Thinking- Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems

Quantitative Reasoning-

A Special Note for Writers of Committee Letters

Medical Schools value committee letters because they provide an integrated and institutional perspective on an applicant's readiness for medical school. They provide a comprehensive evaluation of applicants based on direct observation and the synthesis of information provided by faculty and others at an institution. This integrated perspective provides unique and valuable information about applicants.

While we recognize that many committee letters already incorporate the concepts included in these guidelines and key areas of interest, we believe that the material provided here can only complement the current committee letter process by enhancing its effectiveness. Those who work with individual letter writers can use these guidelines and key areas of interest as educational tools to encourage greater focus in individual letters. Writers of committee letters may also wish to re-fashion the overarching committee letter produced by their school to more closely reflect the central points provided here.