



Guidelines for Recommendation Letters for Pre-Health Students

To Letter Writers:

We thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for an aspiring health professional. We realize that you are taking valuable time from your busy schedules to contribute. We wanted to give you some guidelines to help you make this task more manageable.

Role of the Premedical Advisory Committee (PAC):

The role of the Premedical Advisory Committee is to evaluate Columbia undergraduates and alumni who are applying to a health professional school, most often, medical, dental or veterinary medical school. The outcome of the committee evaluation process is a comprehensive letter that is sent to all of the schools to which the student has applied.

PAC letter of evaluation

This letter is written on a student's request and only after the student completes a pre-applicant process. The pre-applicant process includes submission of letters of recommendation, resume, autobiography, supplemental information form, as well as an interview with the PAC.

The final committee evaluation includes a comprehensive letter of evaluation written by the Premedical Advisory Committee followed by the letters of evaluation that the student submits as a part of the committee application process.

A letter written for a pre-health student will not only be viewed by the Premedical Advisory Committee but will also be sent along to the health professional schools which the student has applied. Please be sure that your letters are written professionally and if possible on official letterhead.

What are we looking for?

The PAC relies heavily on information provided by the student's letters of recommendation. We are looking for specific evaluations of the applicant's abilities in the area in which you supervised his/her work. When you comment on these abilities, please be specific. For example, citing the topic of a student's seminar paper or the subjects on which s/he was most vocal in class discussion helps to make a recommendation more convincing. We have found that the most useful letters include the following:

- 1) **Explanation of relationship between applicant and referee**
- 2) **Information on applicant's personal characteristics** (i.e., integrity, reliability, determination, motivation, honesty, professionalism, leadership, character, maturity, etc.)
- 3) **Information regarding applicant's social skills** (i.e., interpersonal skills, ability to interact with others in groups, ability to establish peer relationships)
- 4) **Comparative information:** How does this student compare to others whom you have taught or with whom you have worked?
- 5) **Assessment of applicant's academic potential:** (if applicable to relationship) – Is this student ready for the rigors of their intended program of study? Do they have good critical thinking and problem solving skills?

Where should I send this letter?

Letter writers may email recommendations to preprofessional@columbia.edu, provided the document (PDF preferred) appears on letterhead with a scanned handwritten signature.

All letters should be addressed generally (i.e. Dear Admissions Committee) and should be sent to the following address:

Columbia University
Office of Preprofessional Advising
Center for Student Advising
403 Lerner Hall, 2920 Broadway,
MC1201, NY, NY 10027

Timeline:

To meet student's needs for the application process, we ask that you submit your letters no later than **June 1st**.

This timing is extremely important in order for the PAC to complete the Committee Evaluation in a timely fashion. If for any reason you are unable to meet this deadline, please contact the Office of Pre-Professional Advising (212) 854-6378. Thank you for supporting one of our pre-health students.