

The City
College of
New York

CUNY School of Medicine

Career Advising: Letters of Recommendation for Residency Applications

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Office of Student Affairs

Letters of Recommendation Overview

- Allows the recommender to share their perspective and comment on aspects of your performance and capabilities
- Primarily come from individuals who have supervised you clinically, but might include a research mentor
- Establish a relationship before identifying potential recommenders
- Required for residency applications and is intended to complement your application
- May be needed for some 4th year elective applications, scholarships, fellowships



Standardized Letters

- Some programs may request standardized form/letter in addition to or instead of a narrative letter.
 - Ortho eSLOR
 - Most EM programs require at least one SLOE, two recommended
 - IM – Dept. of Medicine Summary Letter of Evaluation
- Should be handled same as stand-alone narrative LoRs.
- Enter and confirm the LoR information in MyERAS and provide the LoR Author with a Letter Request Form

Other types of letters

- **Letter of good standing:** form letter confirming that you are student and have no academic issues
- **Letter of recommendation for an elective:** typically a clinical letter that supports your application for a 4th year extramural elective
- **Letter of recommendation from the Dean of OSA:** recommendation for a specific opportunity that specifies a letter from the Dean is required, rarely needed

Types of Programs

- **Categorical:** provide full continuous training required for board certification
- **Primary Care Categorical:** emphasize primary care, full training required for board certification
- **Preliminary Year:** internal medicine or surgery
- **Transitional Year:** broad training
- **Preliminary Pediatrics:** 2 year training prior to entering advanced programs in Child Neurology or Neurodevelopmental disabilities
- **Advanced:** typically begin in PGY-2
 - urology, ophthalmology, dermatology, diagnostic radiology, radiation oncology, physical medicine and rehabilitation, neurology & anesthesiology



How many letters are needed?

- **Categorical Programs:** 3-4 total letters
 - 3 clinical letters (at least 1 in specialty)
 - 1 research letter (if appropriate)
- **Advanced Programs:** 6-7 total letters
 - Prelim/Transitional Year: 3 clinical letters
 - Advanced Program: 3 clinical letters (at least 2 in specialty)
 - 1 research letter (if appropriate)
- Note: You cannot submit more than 4 letters to a single program

Who to ask?.. When?

- Who to ask?
 - Faculty, not residents or fellows
 - Faculty with whom you have worked with clinically
 - Clerkship director, if possible Chairman of Department
- When to ask?
 - Near the end of the clinical clerkship
 - Ask when there is downtime and you have some privacy
 - It is early, which necessitates that you maintain contact and follow up
 - Advantage is that your performance is fresh in their minds

How to ask initially?

- *“Do you think you know my clinical work well enough to write me a strong letter of recommendation?”*
- *“Would you be comfortable writing me a strong letter of recommendation?”*
- Obtain contact information and send a thank you note immediately and let recommender know that you will follow up when ERAS opens to provide more information on how to submit the letter

Additional considerations

- Some programs may require Departmental letters or Chair letter
- Letters can be used for more than one specialty, if generic
- Letters should come from a variety of 3rd and 4th year clinical experiences, but is specialty dependent
- When ERAS opens meet with your Medical Student Advisor to develop a plan for which letters of recommendations you will include in your application



Tips

- If you are still uncertain of your future specialty at the beginning of 4th year or parallel applying, some LoR's can be generic
- Provide recommender with your CV/Personal Statement, when available
- Consider an individual meeting with them before preparation
- Provide them with the author "Tips" sheet and samples LoR
- Stay in touch.. Keep them informed.. Follow up... Express gratitude



SAMPLE follow up EMAIL when ERAS opens(PERSONALIZE and MODIFY)

Dear Dr. XXXX,

I hope you and your family are well.

I would like to thank you again for agreeing to write me a letter of recommendation for my residency application. CSOM recently granted access to ERAS so that I can generate a letter of recommendation request that can be sent to you directly. Before sending the request, I would like to confirm your title.

I have attached my CV and draft of my personal statement (if you are ready to share this). I've also included the CSOM LoR Author Tip Sheet that you may find useful. Please let me know if there is any additional information that you need. I would also be available to meet with you by phone or ZOOM (or enter your choice of application instead) at any time that is convenient for you, if you would like.

I sincerely appreciate your support of my residency application. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

First Name Last Name

CUNY School of Medicine

Class of 20 XX

Consider adding a photo

Tips for Writing Medical Student Letters of Recommendation

TO: Faculty Member
FROM: CUNY School of Medicine, Office of Student Affairs

Your letter of recommendation is a critical part of a student's Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) application. Agreeing to write a strong and thoughtful letter will tremendously help the students' application. If you feel that you cannot write a strong LoR, please tell the student right away. It is okay to say, "I can write you a letter, but it won't be my strongest letter. I encourage you to approach another letter writer."

We are grateful for your help in this process. Typically, authors may begin to upload LoRs in early June, exact dates will be provided. We respectfully request that you submit your letter of recommendation **BEFORE TBD**. Your timely submission to the LoR Portal is extremely important for the student's ability to submit a complete application for residency.

All letter writers will receive a notification email from ERAS to upload their letters directly to ERAS through the Letter of Recommendation Portal. There is no longer an option to submit the LOR to the school. Ensuring high quality (proper spelling of the student's name, correct pronouns, etc.) of the letter is especially important.

Below are some helpful tips for letter of recommendation authors:

DO:

Use Letterhead

Example:

Hospital or University

SAMPLE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION – **STRONG**

Esteemed Residency Program
Well-Known University
1234 University Way
Big City, Florida 54321

March 19, 2014

Dear Program Director,

It is my pleasure to write in support of the application of Mr. Ian Harris for your residency program. I have been an educator for decades with considerable experience with national organizations. I worked closely with Mr. Harris during his third year clerkship as well as during his acting internship. As is evident from his CV, Mr. Harris has excelled throughout his career



Overview of ERAS LoR Submission Process

- Web-based program students and staff use to compile and distribute residency application components.
- Application season opens June, you will receive instructions to gain access to ERAS using your AAMC account ID.
- Within ERAS LoR portal - a unique Letter Request Form with unique ID number for each LoR requested will be generated.
- Indicate whether right to view is waived for each LoR.
- Each author will upload the LoR directly into ERAS.
- Once uploaded it cannot be deleted or revised. A new version can be uploaded, programs can't view older versions.

ERAS LoR request

Add Letter of Recommendation ×

* Indicates required field.

LoR Author Name: *

**LoR Author
Title/Department: ***

**Specialty to which
this letter will be
assigned:**

Note: Specialty field will only be viewable to applicants, their Designated Dean's Office and the LoR Author - not programs.

Additional LoR Information *

- This LoR Author is a Program Director in a current/previous residency or fellowship where I trained. (Applies to Residents/Fellows only)
- This LoR Author is a Department Chair where I completed my clerkship training. Group departmental letters must be signed by the team composing the letter.
- None of the above.

**I waive my right to view my Letter of
Recommendation: *** Yes No

Next steps

- Develop relationships during clerkships
- Identify potential recommenders and send a thank you note
- After ERAS opens:
 - Work with your medical student advisor to determine which letters you will need for your application
 - Reach out to potential recommenders
 - Be prepared to provide your CV, personal statement, and photo
 - Generate a letter request form in ERAS to send to confirmed recommenders
 - Give recommenders sufficient time to submit and monitor ERAS for submission