



PNWU Guidelines for Preceptors on Writing Letters of Recommendation

Thank you for being willing to write a letter of recommendation to assist our student in the residency match process. ERAS (Electronic Residency Application Service) for residency application will open in May. Our student is requesting your letter now while their performance is fresh in your mind. You will be receiving notification when the ERAS system is open and the student enters your information to upload your letter. In the meantime, please review these helpful hints for writing letters of recommendation.

You may agree to write a letter of recommendation when:

- You know the student well enough to write a supportive recommendation
- You are aware of their career goals.
- You have ample time to complete before the deadline

The important elements of strong letters include:

- The student's AOA number and when available, the AAMC identification number
- The salutation, "Dear Program Director,"
- Outlining specific student strengths that set the student apart from others
 - Exceptional medical knowledge
 - Teamwork and communication
 - Empathy
 - How the student compares favorably with others you have worked with – use specific examples
- Knowing whether the student requests a letter specific to your discipline, "The student shows great promise as a general surgeon," or a general recommendation, "The student shows the discipline required to excel as a resident."
- Generalizations are not helpful, like "great student". Be specific on their strengths, like "able to integrate science in the clinical realm", "personable", "equally able to communicate with physicians, nursing staff and family", "always timely", "completed tasks"
- Include the extent of your teaching experience
- Use percentages – "the student was in the top 5% of students I have trained"
- Be careful when using terms like "recommend highly" that may mean different things to different programs.
- Use letterhead and an original signature

You should decline writing a letter of recommendation if:

- You are too busy to meet the deadline
- You do not know the student well enough to recommend
- You cannot write a favorable letter
- You would like to ask the student to write the letter for you