Letters of Recommendation

Graduate schools and employers may request that you submit letters of recommendation prior to your being accepted or hired. The strongest letters of recommendation are provided by course instructors or professionals with whom you have worked closely. These individuals can offer first-hand knowledge of your academic abilities, motivation, reliability, and creativity.

We strongly encourage you to establish mentoring relationships with your university instructors and professionals in the field. Not only will you be able to request letters of recommendation with confidence, your studies will also benefit from your mentors' experience and expertise.

Establish mentoring relationships

- visit departmental advisors and faculty members during their office hours and engage them in discussions related to your scholarly interests
- participate in honors courses, honors independent studies, and research opportunities that are directly related to your interests or career goals
- develop close working relationships with your honors thesis or project chair and committee members
- engage in work/study, co-op, or internship experiences to broaden your knowledge and experience beyond the classroom; communicate regularly with your sponsor and field supervisors

Request your letter(s) at least one month in advance of deadlines

Submit your letter of recommendation request at least 4 weeks in advance of any deadline date you must meet (some writers may require longer). This allows the writer time to:

- meet with you to discuss or clarify any issues
- request additional documentation
- review your materials and compose the letter
- forward your letter to its destination on time

Is a Commonwealth Honors College letter of recommendation appropriate for
your needs? Research the type of letter required by the institutions to which you are applying and verify that a general letter of recommendation from Commonwealth Honors College is appropriate.

Oftentimes graduate schools and prospective employers will specifically request a letter of recommendation from a faculty member with whom you’ve worked or the academic dean of your major's college (e.g., School of Management, College of Arts and Humanities). Some schools (especially law schools) may additionally require your record of disciplinary action and class rank which are provided by the Dean of Students office. A letter of recommendation from Commonwealth Honors College will not be appropriate in these instances.

If you need a letter of recommendation from the Commonwealth Honors College office, please adhere to the following steps.

At least 4 weeks in advance of your deadline:

1. Submit at least three completed "Evaluation of Commonwealth Honors College Student Course Performance" forms to the Commonwealth Honors College office. These evaluations, completed by your honors instructors, will provide feedback regarding your academic performance which we will incorporate in your letter. (Avoid submitting evaluations from instructors who are providing their own separate letter of recommendation for you.)

2. Complete and submit the Letter of Recommendation Request form to the Commonwealth Honors College office, 201 Commonwealth Honors College, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003.

3. Contact the Commonwealth Honors College "Letter of Rec" advisor to follow up on our receipt of your materials and to discuss any special concerns or requests you may have.

Writing will begin when we receive your evaluations and request form. If you wish to submit additional materials for our review (resume, etc.) please submit those along with your request form.

Commonwealth Honors College letters of recommendation are kept on file in our office and can be updated anytime at your request.

If you have questions, please contact the Commonwealth Honors College office at (413) 545-2483 or info@honors.umass.edu.