

Recommendations

Knowing how to request letters

Grad school admissions committees depend heavily on letters of recommendation from their professional colleagues. These recommendations vouch for your ability to succeed at their institution, so it is important to help your recommenders provide a recommendation that will position you well with the admissions committee. Following these guidelines will assist you in helping your recommenders provide you with the best possible endorsement.

1. Cultivate your relationships and choose relevant faculty

- a. A more detailed and personal letter from a faculty member will impress the admissions committee. So ask instructors that know you well.
- b. Each faculty member will have professional contacts at particular schools and will lack a relational network at other schools. Inquire with your faculty which schools they are connected to. Know their alma mater. Strategize about your school selection and faculty recommenders based on potential professional network links.

2. Contact your faculty recommenders early

- a. Faculty need a minimum of three weeks to turn a letter of recommendation around. However, if a faculty member has more time to ruminate on crafting your letter and working with you to refine the piece the letter will turn out much better and thus accomplish your goal of impressing the admissions committee.
- b. Discuss with your potential recommender whether they can provide you a strong recommendation for your chosen graduate program. Their professional reputation is involved so they will be reticent to recommend you to a program they feel you are unsuited for. You need to consider this reality and inquire which programs they recommend you apply to. Of course, you might still apply to one or more institutions which seem more difficult to obtain entrance to (you may get in!). So be sure to apply to some schools your George Fox faculty recommend, as they will have a good read on you and the fit of your potential programs.

3. Provide your faculty recommenders pertinent materials

- a. Once they have agreed to write a letter for you, provide them with copies of the following materials:
 - i. Photocopies of key pages from the application website or pamphlet that highlight the purpose of the program (or scholarship)
 - ii. A copy of your application essays
 - iii. A summary of your career and educational goals
 - iv. A resume or *Curriculum Vitae* (CV)
 - v. A list of your activities (sports, organizations, leadership, volunteer positions)
 - vi. A description (perhaps a well-worded paragraph) of relevant work or research experience related to that graduate program
 - vii. An unofficial copy of your transcript
 - viii. Submission instructions and deadlines for the faculty member. If required, provide pre-addressed stamped envelopes.
 - ix. Fill out and include the FERPA Release for Letter of Recommendation form, which can be found on the George Fox registrar department's [webpage](#).

4. Collaborate with your faculty recommenders throughout the process

- a. Listen to their advice and feedback on anything they provide and act accordingly
- b. Update them on the progress of your application
- c. Inform them of the application result
- d. You will likely use them in the future for another recommendation, so utilizing follow-up communication will foster affiliation and a close, positive relationship with that faculty recommender.
- e. You might consider writing them a thank-you note expressing your appreciation for their time and guidance on your behalf. You could even include a gift card if you prefer.