

Letters of Recommendation: Policies and Guidelines

Below I delineate my policies regarding requests for letters of recommendation to make sure that I have enough time and information to write strong letters that will benefit the student.

- **General things to consider...**

Strong letters of recommendation are built on a couple of factors. The first is highlighting your talent, skills and work ethic. The second is having enough of a relationship with the letter writer that they can paint a strong overall picture of you. When you ask for letters, ask yourself “who knows me as a worker, student, and person? Who did I visit during office hours?” If you have trouble answering these questions, you might have to spend some time cultivating those relationships with faculty and staff. A strong letter can open the door to jobs and graduate schools and also to scholarships and honors/awards.

- **Who should be asking me for a letter?**

If you have been a student in at least **2** classes with me, or if you have completed **2** independent studies courses either crafting your own research project or working with me on my Latina/o/x Physicians research, I am generally happy to write a letter for you. It usually takes me about two quarters to get to know a student well enough to write a pretty strong letter about their strengths and skills.

Most letters I write are for students who have worked with me on an independent research project such as a yearlong Honors Thesis or for the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP). I also write letters for exceptional students who have taken at least **two** courses with me and performed well in those classes. I require that students take at least two courses with me because some of the classes I teach are very large and I might not know you well enough to write a strong letter. Letters of recommendation are stronger and better when I have worked more closely with a student.

I do not write letters for students who 1) have only taken 1 course with me, 2) have not distinguished themselves in their two classes with me, 3) have never visited me during office hours. In these cases, I will not know you well enough to write a strong letter and I won't be able to write about you as a whole, well-rounded person. In either case, a letter from me would not help your application packet if I am unable to speak about you as a whole.

- **If I'm going to write you a letter, what information and materials do you need to provide me?**

To write a letter of recommendation, I need the following materials from you:

- 1) Your academic CV/Resume that includes:

- a.) Awards or grants, research experience, relevant work/volunteer experience, presentations, etc.
- 2) Statement of Purpose or essay that you are submitting to the program/school
- 3) UCI Transcripts that highlight the courses you took with me
- 4) A list of the programs, schools, or jobs that you are applying for and the deadlines by which the letter must be received (see sample of last page) with specific instructions for time changes (PST/EST). If you are applying to sociology Ph.D. programs, also include a list of the professors you might want to work with while there. I usually prefer to **schedule a one-on-one meeting** with the student so we can hammer out the details in person if there will be more than one application.

You also need to provide me with all of the necessary forms and letter mailing materials:

- 1) If I am sending the letter directly to the schools, bring me:
 - a. The specific instructions from the schools/programs you are applying for.
 - b. Stamped, addressed envelopes for each program
 - c. Any forms that need to be completed with the letter
 - d. Please let me know if I must include a “wet signature” over the flap of the envelope.
 - e. If you will pick up the letter because it is part of an application packet you must arrange a time to pick it up.
- 2) If the letter needs to be uploaded online, send me:
 - f. the email message with the URL for uploading. I prefer that students send me gentle reminder emails every now and then because I might forget. Don’t be afraid to send me reminder emails as the date approaches for your letters.

NOTE: Online and paper forms that request the name, address, and affiliation information of your recommender need to be completed by you **BEFORE** the forms are passed on to me. My information is:

Name: Glenda M. Flores, Ph.D.
 Title: Associate Professor
 Address: 3151 Social Science Plaza A
 University of California, Irvine
 Irvine, CA 92697-5100
 Phone: 949-824-4664
 Email: gmflores@uci.edu

- **How much notice should you give me?**

Please let me know at least 1-2 months in advance that you would like a letter of recommendation from me to make sure that I carve out some time to write it. Even if you don’t have all your materials ready when you first ask, I need advance notice so it is on my radar. Remember, the more time you give me the more likely it is that I can get your letter out in time.

- **Anything else?**

I only upload letters to schools directly or put them in a sealed envelope with a wet signature over the flap of the envelope and a piece of clear tape over it. Do not break this seal! This method helps preserve confidentiality and assures admissions committees that the letter contains an honest assessment of your strengths and suitability for the program. I use this method if the program wants you to mail all the materials in one packet.

For the same reasons of protecting confidentiality and assuring honest assessments, when forms ask you whether you want to waive your right to review letters of recommendation you need to indicate YES. This is a standard procedure. Please note that I do NOT write letters if you do not waive access.

Sample E-mail Checklist of Graduate Programs for more than one Letter Request

Hi Dr. Flores,

I am e-mailing you to send a gentle reminder about my Sociology graduate school recommendation letters. By now you should have received reminder e-mails from the following institutions to submit the letters below. If you haven't received a link please let me know.

- 1) UCLA - already submitted by you
- 2) USC - submission deadline (11/25) by 5:00 p.m.
- 3) UC Santa Barbara - submission deadline (11/25)
- 4) Columbia – submission deadline (11/26) -12:00 P.M. PST/3:00 p.m. EST
- 5) Stanford - submission deadline (11/25)
- 6) UC Berkeley - submission deadline (11/30)
- 7) UT Austin - submission deadline (11/30)

Please let me know of any additional information you may need.