

Recommendation Letters Procedures

October 21, 2016

1 Information for Students and Staff

The department will send out recommendation letters in these ways:

1. Snail mail (including “Interfolio”)
2. <http://econjobmarket.org>
3. “Push” Email (that is, when the employer provides an email address to which letters should be sent)
4. “Pull” Email (that is, when the employer, after receiving your application, sends an email to your recommenders asking them to upload the letters to a special-purpose site that the employer has set up)

All of these methods require that your recommenders send PDFs of their letters to econ@jhu.edu.¹ However, you should NOT ask them to send their letters until you have done the things that YOU are supposed to do (detailed below).

Note that these options do NOT include a method of getting letters to any employer that has set up its own database system and wants recommenders and/or students to register for a username, password, etc. In practice, such places will invariably accept letters sent by email to some department staff person, and that is what we will do. YOU need to find out the email address of that staff person. If there are any employers that absolutely insist that applicants and recommenders learn to use their own unique systems, letters to those employers will be completed only AFTER ALL OTHER LETTERS FOR ALL OTHER STUDENTS have been sent using the preferred methods listed above. This is vitally important because from past experience we know that the confusion and delays caused by proprietary systems have the potential to end up making everyone’s letters late, so we can do this only once that risk has been eliminated. The only exception to this rule is the IMF, which has its own procedures that we do follow.

Some employers have a deadline before Nov 15 (a few as early as Nov 1). Most employers have deadlines in middle to late November. Finally, employers with late job postings may appear in the December JOE.

For each timeframe, you will send to econ@jhu.edu a list of employers to which you are applying: **EmployersMoniker-[Which]** where “[Which]” will be the words “Early,”

¹A few employers may demand that the PDFs be “digitally signed.” For now, we will ignore this demand. If and when those employers start to make up a critical mass, we will have to figure out how to train the faculty in how to make digitally signed letters.

“Middle”, or “Late.” There should be at least a week between the date when you send the spreadsheet and the earliest application due-date contained therein. Thus, if you want to apply to some jobs that have a deadline of Nov 1, then by October 23 you would send **EmployersMoniker-Early**. It would be good to include also in the “Early” spreadsheet employers with a deadline up to Nov 15 or 16, so that the workload is spread out over time as much as possible. By Nov 8 you would send **EmployersMoniker-Mid** with the employers who have November deadlines that you did not send in your “Early” spreadsheet. Finally, if any new jobs are posted in the December JOE that you want to apply to, then sometime around Dec 7 you would send **EmployersMoniker-Late**. (It is good to include as many employers as possible in your “Late” spreadsheet because this spreads out the work that **JMStaff** has to do more evenly over time).

You will get these 3 (and ONLY these 3) opportunities to apply to jobs. It is impossible for the staff, for every student, to keep track of more than 3 spreadsheets each of which has multiple employers; experience tells us that everything breaks down if every few days each student drops by the office (or sends an email) saying “oh by the way, please add the following 4 employers to my list.”

Broadly, for each iteration your steps are as follows:

1. Produce your version of **EmployersMoniker** (by “your version” I mean, of course, to rename the template file to, for example, **EmployersThomK-Early.xlsx** if you are Kevin Thom and it is your **Early** list) that contains *all* the employers, and *only* the employers, that you are actually applying to in this round. (You probably will have some employers you have thought about but have decided not to apply to, or to apply to in later rounds; if you want to preserve that information, please copy and paste it to another spreadsheet, and remove it from your main **EmployersMoniker-[Which].xls** spreadsheet that you will give to the staff.)
2. Sort your **EmployersMoniker** spreadsheet according to five sort keys: 1) Date you asked the staff to send the recommendation letters; 2) Method of recommendation (snail mail, <http://econjobmarket.org>, push email (for sorting purposes, label it “email-push”), pull email (label it “email-pull”), or “other” with the understanding that anything in “other” will be sent only after ALL other recommendations for ALL other students are sent); 3) Academic vs. Nonacademic; 4) Domestic vs. Foreign; 5) Employer Name. (There should be a macro built into **EmployersMoniker** that can be executed to accomplish this sort – see the instructions in **EmployersMoniker-Instructions.xlsx**).
3. After sorting the spreadsheet, execute the macro to “hide” the information that **JMStaff** does not need for purposes of tracking which letters have been sent. (Instructions for how to execute this macro should be on the first page of **EmployersMoniker**).
4. Then send **EmployersMoniker** to econ@jhu.edu, and be sure to cc **JHUEconPhDPlacementOfficer** (The placement director needs to know where you have applied for a host of reasons, including being prepared for calls that employers might make seeking further info).

5. You'll probably want next to immediately "unhide" those columns that were hidden, so that you can see them yourself. Again, there should be a macro that accomplishes this described in the first-page instructions.
6. *After having sent their EmployersMoniker-[Which].xls spreadsheet*, the student should follow the steps outlined in detail below for those applications that involve either push or pull email.
7. *After taking care of their push and pull email applications*, students should complete their <http://econjobmarket.org> applications for this round (see below for details).
8. *After having done all of this*, the student should email their recommenders and ask them to send their letters to econ@jhu.edu. Note that your request to recommenders needs to come last because if the letters arrive before the other steps have been taken, the letters may get lost. (Though it would be wise to remind your advisors a week or two beforehand that letters from them will be needed soon).

More detailed procedures are below:

1. Snail Mail:

- a) **"Interfolio."** This is a service that some employers use to outsource the processing of letters. They accept snail mail letters, with the twist that each envelope containing a letter must also contain an "authentication" document that Interfolio uses to process the letter. If an employer uses Interfolio, your first step should be to check with them whether they would be willing to use a "pull email" approach instead. If not, then YOU (the job candidate) must therefore abide by the procedures for sending regular letters (detailed below) with the ADDITION that you must provide the printed-out authentication documents required for sending letters to Interfolio. For further details, see the link at

<http://www.interfolio.com/helpcenter/index.cfm/133>

- b) **Regular.** Students will ask the staff for the appropriate number of business size envelopes (with the Johns Hopkins return address), attach the address labels for their employers (the address labels are created by a special macro in the spreadsheet – see <http://econ.jhu.edu/jobmarket/Information/>), and return them divided into 5 groups (academic-USA, non-academic-USA, academic-International, non-academic-International) held together by rubber bands (one envelope per employer). On the first envelope of each group, students will attach a post-it reporting their name, the letter type (academic or non-academic), destination (USA or international), the names of the recommenders and the number of envelopes. Here is an example of the post-it:

Student's name
Academic - USA
Prof. Carroll
Prof. Faust
Prof. Jeanne
35 envelopes

Staff can thus pick up a group of letters and immediately see how many copies of the letters to print, the recommenders' names, and the letter type (academic or non-academic). Staff can ask students to help sealing the envelopes and applying postage. The mail is picked up at 1:30 in the afternoon, so the staff will usually need at least a couple of days to get your letters out. Further advice from several former Hopkins students (successful job seekers!) is available in the documents labelled **AdviceMoniker.pdf** in the Resources folder on the **JHUJobMarket** page.

2. **Pull email:** Some employers have set up systems that allow recommenders to upload letters directly themselves. These employers will ask the student to provide the email address of each person who is to provide a letter. The employer then sends an email to each of those email addresses, requesting that the letter be uploaded. (This is a “pull” system because the employer is trying to “pull” the letter from the recommender.)

In order for us to keep track of letters in a centralized way, and to relieve recommenders of the burden of figuring out how to upload their letters, our procedure is as follows. When the employer asks for the email address of a JHU faculty recommender, you should always reply with **econ@jhu.edu** rather than the faculty member's actual email.

If the recommender is not a JHU faculty member but they would like **JMStaff** to handle uploading their letters, you should just use **econ@jhu.edu** as the recommender's email address. If the recommender *wants* to handle their letters themselves, then you can give the employer their real email address. But this is discouraged, because it means that we do not have any way to track whether the letters have been sent or not.

3. **Push email:** Some employers just provide an email address to which letters should be sent. In order to speed up the process, students will provide the staff with as few as possible email groups (in general two, for academic and non-academic employers). For push email, we do not make any distinction between JHU faculty recommenders and outside recommenders; **JMStaff** will simultaneously send out letters of both kinds of recommenders using the procedure below. Students will send to **econ@jhu.edu** one single email with subject “email lists for recommendation letters for [your name]” whose content will look like this:

- **GROUP 1** (recommenders: Prof. Carroll, etc.)
 - **subject:** Academic Recommendation Letters Needed for [your name]

- **Body:** employer1@aaa.aaa, employer2@aaa.aaa, employer3@aaa.aaa, etc.
- **GROUP 2** (recommenders: Jesus H. Christ, Carl Christ, Adrian Pagan, etc.)
 - **subject:** Nonacademic Recommendation Letters Needed for [your name]
 - **Body:** employer1@aaa.aaa, employer2@aaa.aaa, employer3@aaa.aaa, etc.
- **GROUP 3** (recommenders: James Bond, , etc.)
 - **subject:** Extra super secret special jobs Recommendation Letters for [your name]
 - **Body:** employer1@aaa.aaa, employer2@aaa.aaa, employer3@aaa.aaa, ...

The staff should create one email for each group (copying and pasting the “Subject” fields from the student’s email), attach the appropriate letters (academic or nonacademic) and, in the email software, make sure to request an “acknowledged” receipt. If error messages are returned (for example for a mistyped email address, or over quota of the recipient’s account, etc.), the staff will forward the error message (but not the recommendation letter!) to the student in question. The student must determine the reason for the error and provide the staff with an alternative email address.

4. <http://econjobmarket.org>:

- For JHU faculty recommenders, <http://econjobmarket.org> identifies recommenders using an official JHU email addresses.
 - Many faculty already have an <http://econjobmarket.org> account; for these recommenders, it will be obvious how to make <http://econjobmarket.org> send the recommender a request for a letter.
 - Some faculty members may not yet have an <http://econjobmarket.org> account. For security reasons, <http://econjobmarket.org> now insists that each recommender can have only one account at <http://econjobmarket.org>, associated with a unique @jhu.edu email address. Even though the faculty member may never use that email address (instead, for example, using a gmail account for all correspondence), they nevertheless do *have* a JHU email address. If they don’t know what it is, they can ask Nina. You need to find out from the faculty member what email address they want you to give to <http://econjobmarket.org> when it asks for their address. Once you give <http://econjobmarket.org> that email address, a message will be sent to the email address informing the faculty member that an account has been established in their name at <http://econjobmarket.org>. After logging in, they should designate econ@jhu.edu as a “proxy” who can load their letters for them, and so when you request subsequent letters the request should actually go to econ@jhu.edu, who will receive a “pull” email notification and has to click on the link provided for each recommender, click on the name of the student who required the letter, upload the letter, and select all the employers.

- Recommenders who are not JHU faculty and who do NOT have their own login ID at <http://econjobmarket.org> will need to have an account created for them (the account is created automatically the first time a student identifies the recommender by giving <http://econjobmarket.org> the recommender's email address), then they must upload their letters themselves. New <http://econjobmarket.org> security measures prevent us from uploading letters on behalf of people who are not JHU faculty.² The student must communicate this information to the recommender.

In sum, both inside and outside recommenders send their letters to econ@jhu.edu. Details are:

- EJM New inside recommenders should set econ@jhu.edu as their proxy (old inside recommenders should already have done this in prior years, and need to do nothing at all beyond sending letters to econ@jhu.edu)
- Push Email Inside and outside recommenders follow the same procedures, which require the student to send carefully-constructed emails to econ@jhu.edu as described above.
- Pull Email For inside recommenders, student requests employer send email to econ@jhu.edu. For outside recommenders, student requests employer send email to recommender's outside email address.
- Snail Mail Inside and outside recommenders follow same procedures, described above.

2 Information for Staff

Most of what the staff will do for recommendation letters is implicit in the previous section. To summarize:

1. You will receive an **EmployersMoniker** spreadsheet from a student. When you receive it, print it out.
2. *After* you receive that spreadsheet, you should start receiving requests for letters through econ@jhu.edu.
3. Some naughty students may request letters via <http://econjobmarket.org> or the push or pull email procedures before they send you the spreadsheet; if you receive such requests before having received the student's spreadsheet, please send them a message asking them to send you their spreadsheet, so that you can keep track of which letters have been sent.

²The same steps that the staff completes in the bullet point about JHU faculty. They log in, they upload their letter, they indicate it's for, e.g., colleen.carey@jhu.edu, and then they select all employers and tick the box for all future employers.

4. Whenever you respond to a request for letters through econ@jhu.edu, put a checkmark on the corresponding line in the student's printed spreadsheet.
5. If a deadline is looming and you do NOT have a checkmark on the student's spreadsheet, there may be a problem of some kind: The employer mistyped the email address for econ@jhu.edu, the student made a mistake somewhere, etc. As the big deadlines approach, please look at the spreadsheets and see whether there are letters that should have been sent but have not been.
6. If different staff persons are handling different categories of letters (like, one person is handling snail mail letters and another is handling the rest), then each person responsible for a particular category of letters should print their own copy of the spreadsheet and keep track of letters sent.

3 Information for Faculty

Each JHU faculty member sending a recommendation letter will need to get an account at <http://econjobmarket.org>. According to Nina, your account is first established by the STUDENT who first requests a letter from you. That student must provide to <http://econjobmarket.org> a valid @jhu.edu email address for you. Personal email addresses like those from gmail or yahoo are now prohibited by <http://econjobmarket.org> for security reasons.

If you are not yet registered on <http://econjobmarket.org> and a student provides <http://econjobmarket.org> with a valid JHU email address for you inside <http://econjobmarket.org>, that will become your unique <http://econjobmarket.org> email address. (If you can't remember if you are registered but you think you know what email address you would be registered under if you are, you can check whether you are registered by going to <http://econjobmarket.org> and trying to log in using that email address. If you don't remember the password, you can reset it.)

So, if you have a preferred JHU email address (JHED actually automatically sets up a number of aliases for each faculty member), you need to tell your students what that address is. (They should ask; but it can't hurt to proactively tell them).

Once you have been registered for <http://econjobmarket.org> and received a confirmation email to your JHU account, you can designate a "proxy" to handle the actual work of uploading your letters. We (the Job Market Collective Front) insist that you do things this way, because that provides us (the Front) with a centralized way of keeping track of where the process is. To repeat, you must NOT upload your letters yourself; you MUST designate a proxy.

The proxy is Maggie Potts; the email address to use for the proxy is econ@jhu.edu. The good thing about using a proxy is that you (as a faculty member) need only to send your letters out once, to econ@jhu.edu, and everything else is handled for you after that.

N.B.: When you send your letters to econ@jhu.edu, please use self-explanatory names, like `CarrollCD-For-WhiteMN-Academic.pdf`, or `CarrollCD-For-WhiteMN-NonAcademic.pdf`, or, if the same letter is to be sent both to academic and to nonacademic employers, `CarrollCD-For-WhiteMN-Generic.pdf`.