

# LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR ADMISSION APPLICATION

A letter of recommendation (LOR) is specific to academic requirements. It is required by the schools (university/college) along with your application form when you want to make your final submission to the school. A LoR should describe your talents and skills and highlight the academic/employment relationship between you and your referee.

It is directly sent to the university or sometimes the university sends a link directly to the recommender's email through which they have to submit their LOR. Most institutions require a minimum of two or three LoR to be submitted.

## There are three possible formats for references:

**1) Electronic references:** Many graduate programs utilize an electronic reference ("e-ref") system. In the online application system, applicants are asked to provide an email address for each referee. A unique link will be emailed to each referee, allowing them to log in to a secure site and submit an online reference or upload a reference document as an attachment.

**2) Paper letters of reference:** Your referee may wish to send a paper letter. Paper letters of reference should be on referee's official letterhead and must be mailed directly to the relevant program department/school in a sealed and endorsed envelope.

**3) Paper reference forms:** This could be an academic reference form or professional reference form.

The **academic reference** form is used in situations where the referee is someone who you have interacted with in an academic setting (e.g. referee was the professor of a course in

which you were enrolled). See link for sample:

[https://www.grad.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/forms/reference\\_letter\\_academic.pdf](https://www.grad.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/forms/reference_letter_academic.pdf)

The **professional reference form** is used in situations where the reference is someone who you have interacted with in a professional setting (e.g. referee was your supervisor at work). See link for sample:

[https://www.grad.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/forms/reference\\_letter\\_professional.pdf](https://www.grad.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/forms/reference_letter_professional.pdf)

**Note:** Some graduate programs have special requirements for references. Check the individual graduate program's website for the required number and format of references to be submitted.

## Shortlisting an Ideal Referee

Referees mostly from academic background could be your HOD, your project supervisor, your Course adviser should be among your reference, but if you believe they wouldn't write very well about you, you can find other lecturers in your department you believe will give you a powerful reference. Referees could also be your recent or last employer or even the place you may have served i.e. NYSC Primary Place of Assignment for Nigeria student

To choose either an employer or a professor who you think can be ideal as referees; you need to first make a list of the names that come to your mind. Think over and choose the best from the list! Finally, you need to shortlist two or three as requested by the admission committee.

So who would be the best person to write your LoR? The following pointers should help you decide the ideal referee.

i) You should have worked closely with the referee; ideally the referee should have been your lecturer or academic guide.

ii) You and your referee should have a good academic relationship and the referee should have a good impression of you.

iii) Getting a LoR from someone who shares a 'love-hate relationship' with you is pointless as the referee may provide negative feedback about you.

iv) If you are submitting a LoR written by your former employer, you can request your employer to highlight your career achievements.

v) The LoR should highlight your merits, efficiency and leadership skills; and present a positive picture to the admission committee.

### **Academic excellence:**

This section should discuss your grade, awards/scholarship/recommendation you received during your degree(s). This section should highlight how good you are academically and there is nothing has been humble but blow your whistle as loud as possible.

### **Research potential:**

Here, the reference should focus on your ability to conduct research. Discuss the title, objectives and results of your thesis. Do you have any published article? Discuss it here. Also, if you had attended any conference/workshop, you should discuss it here. If you applying for a program that is thesis based, those reviewing your reference want to know your ability to successfully conduct research, which make this section a good place to shine.

## **Leadership quality:**

This section should focus on your work experience, volunteering activities within the community or sport activities that you had received any award. Also, this is a place to showcase your leadership quality such as part of students' leadership, part of an organization in the community or religious circle.

If you have adequate and quality work experience, this is the place to highlight them. Discuss what you had done which made a difference. As little as selflessly assisting someone/community to overcome a difficult challenge might be the main reason the admission committee decided to accept you into the program

## **What information I should provide to my referee?**

To assist your referees, I will suggest you write a draft and forward it to them. This ensures that anybody writing a reference for you can adequately do justice to it. Please take it as important as possible since it might be the main deciding factor in your admission. The draft should include:

- The date the recommendation is due.
- Your current contact information, so your recommender can reach you, if necessary.
- Information about the position or program to which you are applying.
- A brief description of your goals and plans if needed.
- Your CV, transcripts and any information you would like your recommender to address in his/her letter.
- A draft of your personal statement or research proposal, if such is required for your application.
- A reminder of how you and your recommender know one another; classes you have taken with him/her, the grades you received in those classes, paper topics you worked on, etc. You may wish to include a copy of a successful paper or final exam, and any comments your professor gave you on your work.

## **WHAT STYLE AND FORMAT Should You Use For A LoR?**

The style and format for a letter of recommendation should follow general business letter formatting guidelines. Letters should always be typed documents using word processing software on the computer.

Letters that are handwritten or typed using a typewriter are generally not seen as being as professional. Letters should always be on official letterhead of recommender organization (professional) or school (academics)

## **How long should the LoR Be?**

Letter of recommendations should always be written with more than two paragraphs. Anything less than two shows that your recommender has no clue about your academic/professional performance and don't obviously know much about you.

As a rule of thumb, it should be one page in length, but some may be up to two pages. Letters longer than this may actually be counterproductive.

## **How to submit Letter of Recommendation?**

Submitting your LOR depends on the school that you are applying to. Every school has specifics about the manner in which they need a recommendation letter.

Confidentiality is of utmost importance when submitting LOR. The recommender is either required to directly contact the school admission office or you must send the drafts in tamper-proof sealed envelopes.

Here are the most common ways to submit your LOR:

### **#1 Online Submission:**

Your target school may ask you to specify the name and email of your recommender on their online application portal. Once done, your recommender would receive an email with a URL to answer a few questions about you.

The instructions to write your recommendation would be pretty straightforward and easy to follow. There may be some word limit – 200 to 400 words – for each question. There may also be an option to save the draft recommendation and submit later, once your recommender has answered all the questions.

### **#2 Email Submission:**

Many schools require the Recommendation Letters to be emailed to the schools' Admission Office by the recommenders from their official email ids i.e [xoxoxo@uni.edu.ng](mailto:xoxoxo@uni.edu.ng) or [xoxoxo@dangoteplc.com](mailto:xoxoxo@dangoteplc.com)

Your recommender may need to mention your application number in the email subject. The recommendation letter should be on the letterhead of the recommender – university's or company's letterhead – with the signature of the recommender.

Please ensure that your recommender submits your recommendation letter from his official email ID and not from Gmail or other personal emails.

### **#3 Submission by Post:**

Some schools ask for the recommendation letter to be sent by post.

You need to courier your recommendation letter in a sealed, signed and stamped (though not necessarily in the official envelope but on the official letterheads) envelop. You may also need to include a cover letter that clearly mentions the course name, application number and all specifics of the recommenders.

### **Do's while writing a letter of recommendation**

- Give the referee adequate time to draft the LOR. If possible, spend time with your referee, helping him or her with inputs required to draft the letter or if they don't mind send them a draft to swipe for use.
- Ensure that the letter is written in crisp and simple English. Make sure the letter is not riddled with grammar errors.
- Also make sure you follow a specific format and font while writing the LOR – every LOR must have the basic structure, starting with date and place, salutation, referee's introduction, the body of the LOR, a concluding paragraph and finally the signature.
- Ensure that all information stated in the letter matches your academic scores; any specific achievements related to the course you wish to study should be mentioned. Always maintain factual accuracy.
- If the institution has specified a word-limit, say 500-600 words, for the LOR, then ensure you adhere to it.
- Ensure that your referee knows the course that you plan to study. It will be comical if you aspires to study nuclear physics and the referee writes something to the effect — 'He/she plans to study Bio-chemistry

## Don'ts while writing a letter of recommendation

- Don't try writing an LOR on your own and using someone's signature. That's illegal or else they are fully aware.
- Don't get a letter written by a referee who does not know anything about your academic or professional achievements i.e. chances might be they won't put in a good word for you
- Don't wait till the last minute to send over the letter to the institution.

## Frequently Asked Questions for LoR

### Q. Why is Recommendation Letters Important?

**A.** letter of recommendation enhances your chances to secure a seat at your favorite school. Many consultants believe that your application documents if drafted in the right way can influence the Admission Committee even if you do not have excellent scores.

Along with it, the LOR works as a validation of your resume. For all the work experience and projects you have mentioned in the resume/CV, a LOR from their respective validators will help in enhancing your profile. Adding to it, a LOR has a more personal touch, thus, the Admission committee is able to see you as a person rather than just an applicant.

### Q. How many letters of recommendation are required?

**A.** Usually, any school you apply to would ask for at least three letters of recommendation. These three LORs should be from three different recommenders. Sometimes the school is specific about what type of LORs they require. For instance, if they ask for three LORs, they would like two from the professional front and one from academic, or at least one



should be from the professional front (internships) while the rest can be from your school faculty. Therefore, it is important to check the university website thoroughly about instructions related to your application documents and submission of drafts.

**Q. Any advice on how to request a letter of recommendation?**

**A.** You might get confused about which lecturer/professor to ask for LOR. In such a case, you can ask any Professor with whom you share a good rapport with, HoD or your Project Guide for a LOR. You will not need much coaxing to get a genuine LOR from them. In the professional front, you can ask your Reporting Manager, Team Lead or Project Lead for a LOR as they already know you closely. Last but not the least; it is always favorable to be in the good books of your Professors and/or Project Leads/Managers!

**Q. What kind of information does the recommender need from me for the LOR?**

**A.** If your recommender is willing to write the LOR himself/herself, then you should provide them with the following data:

- Your resume (this should contain all your experience in the school/firm). This will help him/her to remember instances easily and write accordingly.
- The name of your target school and a link to their website/department website. It is a good idea to share with them the programme and course name as well if you feel safe with them
- Personal characteristics you would like them to talk about (related to the recommender)
- Specific achievements you would like them to mention (related to the recommender)

### **Q. Can a fellow student or colleague write a LOR for me?**

**A.** This is a common misconception but No. A fellow student or your colleague cannot write a Letter of Recommendation for you, as a LOR needs to be professional and devoid of any friendly or biased notions. Hence, universities even specify how many letters of recommendation they require from your professional and academic front.

**Question.** Some of us have been through with school for a decade ago. Lecturers might have died; move on to another school or even if they're still there won't remember you. You can't just waltz in and ask for a reference from a lecturer, so much explanations must accompany your request. It's quite easier for recent graduates.

**Answer.** Truly the reference from a supervisor carries so much weight in your application. It can be a deal breaker in getting admission in so many situations. As a result of cases like this, we have a Faculty and a Department in every higher institution around the world. The reference letter doesn't necessarily have to come from the lecturer/professor that taught you

All that is needed is to walk to the (your) department and introduce yourself (endeavor to know your matric number and one or two names of the lecturer(s) who took some courses, name of the HOD during your set and go with some cash as per tradition to motivate them to help). The department would surely assist you except maybe if your record isn't found.

If the Department has agreed to assist you, you would be automatically assigned to a lecturer who will send a reference letter on your behalf with the institutional email. Your academic or research ability can be determined by the lecturer through your transcript or academic records with the Department.

**Question.** Who can best give me an acceptable academic recommendation for masters application, aside my undergraduate lecturer? I am having a hard time requesting for recommendations from my undergraduate university lecturers because I have exhausted

my chances of them recommending me to schools (through filling the online recommendation letter) since 2015.

Yes, I have been applying for admission since 2015 and I am still applying. Please can someone help me out on this? I have close relatives in the US who have reputable jobs (a high school principal, a Nurse and a pharmacist) whom I can use as recommenders. I don't know if it is advisable I use them. I am also looking at requesting for a reference from my boss at my work place in Nigeria. If that would also count?

**Answer.** Your relatives or people outside your department would not be credible enough to give you reference because it will not carry enough weight to justify your fitness for admission and funding. Your boss in office could be a good one if you are working in a discipline related to your undergraduate course and he can say a lot about your academic potential such as research capability (if your job is research-based). Apart from this, your best and most credible references that will increase your chances are your lecturers.

I will encourage you to try your lecturers one more time. However, it is important that they give you excellent references because references count a lot in the admission process in CANADA or most foreign schools. Using generic languages in your reference letters may be why you have not been admitted and funded. The references needs to be specific and mentioning some of your achievements (while in school) in the references could be a plus for you.

## **Useful Template Phrases for Recommendation Letters**

This template phrases or “form phrases” allow the recommender to plug in their specific information while not spending too much time deciding how to compose every single aspect of the writing. Use the following form phrases to help craft a more professional letter of recommendation.

### **Recommender Introducing themselves:**

- My name is {recommender} and I have been a Professor of Math at {University} since {date}.
- I write to you today to proudly express my support for {Student} in applying to your prestigious university.

### **Discussing his relationship with you:**

- I first came to know {Student} while teaching him/her in my {Course Name} course...
- I was {Student}'s thesis advisor during his/her final year.
- I have known {Student} for several years now and can attest to his/her strengths and quality of character.

### **Discussing your general positive traits:**

- {Student} has excellent communication skills and displays them regularly in class discussions.
- He/She is a highly intelligent and competent student who excels in many areas.
- Not only is {Student} hard-working and thoughtful, but he/she also demonstrates kindness and generosity towards his/her peers.

### **Demonstrating evidence of your character and skills:**

- She/he has shown herself/himself to be a true leader who is able to successfully develop plans and implement them in his/her works.
- {Student} demonstrated his/her independence daily, completing difficult lab exercises by researching outside of class.
- During his/her internship, {Student} consistently managed his/her work responsibilities diligently and learned quickly. For example

**Discussing the school/program you are applying to:**

- As {University} is renowned for its {Program}, I believe this is an ideal place for {Student} to solidify his/her abilities and cement his/her knowledge of {area of study}.
- The learning environment that {University} is famous for creating excellent opportunities in which {Student} to apply his/her skills.

**Final endorsement:**

- For the above reasons, I am confident that {Student} will make an excellent addition to your graduate program, and I wholeheartedly support him/her for admission to your program.
- Thank you for your time and attention in reading my endorsement.

**Closing line: polite offer to be contacted if needed:**

- If I can be of any further assistance, or provide you with any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Full name of the recommender

Designation-Department

College, City

Contact No:

Official E-mail ID:

## Sample LORs that will help you to impress the admissions team:

Check out the links for sample academic and professional reference letter to model for your MBA, MSc or any post graduate program

- ❖ Sample LOR written by a professor for a student looking to study Electronic Engineering abroad >>> [https://images6.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc\\_27651.pdf](https://images6.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc_27651.pdf)
- ❖ Sample LOR written by an employer for an employee looking to study Chemical Engineering abroad >>> [https://images5.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc\\_27652.pdf](https://images5.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc_27652.pdf)
- ❖ Sample LOR written by a professor for a student looking to study an MBA abroad >>> [https://images4.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc\\_27657.pdf](https://images4.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc_27657.pdf)
- ❖ Sample LOR written by an employer for an employee looking to study an MBA abroad >>> [https://images2.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc\\_27658.pdf](https://images2.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc_27658.pdf)
- ❖ Sample LOR written by a professor for a student looking to study MS in Computer Science abroad >>> [https://images2.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc\\_27659.pdf](https://images2.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc_27659.pdf)
- ❖ Sample LOR written by an employer for an employee looking to study MS in Analytical Chemistry abroad >>> [https://images5.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc\\_27664.pdf](https://images5.content-hci.com/commimg/myhotcourses/blog-inline/myhc_27664.pdf)

## How to draft a PhD LOR

Element	Content
Addressee	Dear Admission Committee,
About the reviewer association with the applicant.	It is a pleasure to recommend Ms Victoria Adam for a PhD programme in Psychiatry at [University Name]. I have known Ms. Victoria for the past two years through her work in my Project titled, 'Learned Helplessness and Achievements in Adolescent Males and Females'. Victoria has completed her Masters and MPhil in Adolescent Psychology from [University Name]. She first approached me two years ago about the possibility of work in my project as a Research Fellow. We had discussed the scope of the project and her job responsibilities in our first meeting.
Quality 1 Subject knowledge	She had asked good questions and also referred a few Learned Helplessness studies that have been carried out by the students in the Department as their Masters and M. Phil Project. I was impressed by her preparedness for the interview and her inquisitiveness to know more on the subject. On appointment, I often found her in the library looking for other similar studies done. She often discussed her findings with me as well as discusses the course of action and possible evaluation techniques for the project. After a long secondary research, we decided on evaluating our subjects on NEO-Five Factor Inventory (FFI) before the actual experiment. This study examined the psychometric properties of the Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire (CASQ), the 48-item questionnaire designed to assess children's causal explanations for positive and negative events
Quality 2. Leadership skill	During that project, Victoria demonstrated the ability to work independently with creativity and enthusiasm as well as effectively lead a team of 3 Project Fellows for sample selection and data collection techniques. She trained the team on all aspects of NEO-

	<p>Five Factor Inventory (FFI) as well as CASQ. She was also able to collect the CASQ data of more than 50% of the students a year later.</p>
<p>Quality 3. Social and Communication Skill and Analysis skills</p>	<p>Her communication skills put both the subject as well as the interviewer at ease thus facilitating an unbiased and effective data collection. Victoria has good clarity on the various data analysis statistical packages especially MATLAB and ANOVA which immensely helped us in doing a comparative study through various methods. She was quick to learn R and use it effectively for analysis. She would be invariably the first person be at the school well prepared for the day.</p>
<p>Quality 4. Team skills</p>	<p>The Project Fellows in the project always had praises for Victoria. They always mentioned her patience and perseverance in clarifying their doubts on the standardized data collection and analysis techniques. Victoria had doubled her efforts on data collection when she found that one of the project fellows was down with fever and cold. She had not let this effect the Project Schedule.</p>
<p>Quality 5. Creativity and patience</p>	<p>Victoria is very creative and patient with the kids. The long questionnaire would be too tedious for the kids so she would often make origami for them as they worked on the questionnaire.</p>
<p>Quality 6. Achiever</p>	<p>Her hard work and perseverance paid off when her paper, ‘Learned helplessness and achievements in pre-adolescent males and females’ was selected for publication in an International Journal.</p>
<p>Strong Recommendation</p>	<p>Ms Victoria Adam is clearly the best student that I have worked with in the past few years. I strongly recommend her for a PhD programme from [University Name]. She would be an asset to any university she joins.</p>
<p>Referee information</p>	<p>ABC DEF Professor</p>



	Department of Social Psychology
	University Name
	City
	Email ID:
	Contact No:

## **MORE SAMPLES AND RESOURCE TO CONSULT ON LoR IF YOU NEED TO:**

- 1) [https://sancy.iut-clermont.uca.fr/~lafourcade/DIVERS/sample\\_letter.pdf](https://sancy.iut-clermont.uca.fr/~lafourcade/DIVERS/sample_letter.pdf)
- 2) <https://gsi.berkeley.edu/media/sample-recommendation-letter.pdf>
- 3) <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/writingrecommendationlettersonline/sites/www.e-education.psu.edu/writingrecommendationlettersonline/files/Ch5pdf3.pdf>
- 4) [https://www.saintmarys.edu/files/writing\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.saintmarys.edu/files/writing_guidelines.pdf)
- 5) <https://www.eduers.com/reference/freesample/>
- 6) <https://www.thoughtco.com/getting-recommendation-letters-4132538>

**You'll Testify**

*Victor Ola*