Recommendation Letters Procedures

2023-05-18

1 Information for Students and Staff

The department will send out recommendation letters in these ways:

1. ()
2. ()
3. ()
4. ()
5. "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)
6. "Push" Email (that is, when the employer provides an email address to which letters should be sent)

All of these methods require that your recommenders send PDFs of their letters to .[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.

[1] A 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.

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 a list of employers to which you are applying: `-[Which]` where “Which” will be the words “Early,” “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 -. 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 - 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 -. (It is good to include as many employers as possible in your “Late” spreadsheet because this spreads out the work that 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 (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 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 spreadsheet that you will give to the staff.)

2. Sort your spreadsheet according to five sort keys:
   a) Date on which the staff are to send the recommendation letters;
   b) Method of recommendation (, , , , 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);
   c) Academic vs. Nonacademic;
   d) Domestic vs. Foreign;
   e) Employer Name.

   (There should be a macro (`Ctrl+w`) built into that can be executed to accomplish this sort – see the instructions in `-Instructions.xlsx`).

3. Put the list in your `Private` directory on the server.
4. Then send an email message to AND to , letting us know that the list has been posted, AND containing a clickable link to the file. For example, if I were applying in 2020, and this was my "Early" list, I'd send a message like:

   > `To:` ,
   >
   > Subject: EmployersCarrollCD-Early.xls is posted
   >
   > I have posted my first Employers speadsheet at:
   >
   > https://www.econ2.jhu.edu/jobmarket/2020/CarrollCD/Private/EmployersCarrollCD-Early.xls

   (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. *After having sent* their spreadsheet, the student should follow the steps outlined in detail below for those applications that involve either push or pull email.
6. *After taking care of their push and pull email applications*, students should complete their , , , and applications for this round (see below for details).
7. *After having done all of this*, the student should email their recommenders and ask them to send their letters to . 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. **():**
   - For JHU faculty recommenders, identifies recommenders using an official JHU email addresses.
     - Many faculty already have an account; for these recommenders, it will be obvious how to make send the recommender a request for a letter.
     - Some faculty members may not yet have an account. For security reasons, now insists that each recommender can have only one account at , 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 . You need to find out from the faculty member what email address they want you to give to when it asks for their address. Once you give 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 . After logging in, they should designate as a "proxy" who can load their letters

for them, and so when you request subsequent letters the request should actually go to , 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 Department of Economics full-time faculty and who do NOT have their own login ID at will need to have an account created for them (the account is created automatically the first time a student identifies the recommender by giving the recommender's email address), then they must upload their letters themselves.[2] New security measures prevent us from uploading letters on behalf of people who are not JHU faculty, including recently departed JHU faculty who still have an official JHU email (the letter writer must write from their new institution). The student must communicate this information to the recommender.

2. **():** Students will enter 's name, with the email address , on the cover sheet provided by the AJO system. Check the box: "must check here if the person above will upload letters on behalf of multiple writers" and enter the actual writers' names in the box provided. After all reference letters for each student are received, will make 1 PDF file of all letters and upload their file to the AJO site. The student will be allowed to see when this upload is complete. This service will be provided for both JHU Economics and external recommenders.

3. **():** Students who are using must ask their JHU Economics Department reference writer to go to and set up a surrogate for their reference letters. The surrogate name is and the email address is .

4. **():** Before using the Interfolio System, students must wait for an email from indicating that she has received *all* your letters of recommendation. will tell you if you have multiple letters of recommendation from a specific faculty member as well as the type of recommendation (for example: Generic, Academic, or Non-Academic). *Do not proceed* with the recommendation requests if you don't know the type of recommendation letter you are getting from each specific faculty member.

   When entering the recommendation requests in Interfolio please make sure to:

   - Start the recommendation request by going to "Letters" in the left menu bar.
   - Enter the recommender as and as the e-mail for each recommendation request. You need to do this as many times as the number of recommendation letters you are expecting to have.

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

- For each recommendation request, specify under "Document Title" the recommender's actual name (e.g. Dr. Laurence Ball) and the type of the recommendation letter (generic, academic, non-academic. etc.) per 's e-mail. For example, if emailed you that Professor Ball wrote you both academic and non-academic letters of recommendation, one of your document titles would be: `Dr. Laurence Ball_non-academic recommendation` and another would be `Dr. Laurence Ball_academic recommendation`.
- "Description" – leave blank.
- "Message to Recommender" – leave as is.
- Under "Recommendation Type" there are two choices – General and Specific position. Only choose "Specific position" and enter the recommender actual name along with the type of the reference letter (generic, academic, non-academic). For example: `Dr. Laurence Ball_non-academic recommendation`.
- "Due date" - this is irrelevant, just choose a date a few days ahead. Your actual deadlines are already included in the spreadsheets sent to .

All Interfolio reference letters will be uploaded to Interfolio directly by , including the ones from external recommenders.

5. **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 rather than the faculty member's actual email.

   If the recommender is not a JHU faculty member but they would like to handle uploading their letters, you should just use 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.

6. **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; will simultaneously send out letters of both kinds of recommenders using the procedure below. Students will send to 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; ...

NOTE: *All email addresses included in the groups must be separated by a semicolon.*

The staff should create one email for each group (copying and pasting the “Subject” fields from the student’s email) and attach the appropriate letters (academic or nonacademic). 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.

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 spreadsheet from a student. When you receive it, insert a new Column A and save the spreadsheet to the students electronic folder located on the (X) drive or Stella as it is named. This new column will be used to mark off each employer once their letters are sent to them.

2. *After* you receive that spreadsheet, you should start receiving requests for letters through .

3. Some naughty students may request letters via 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 IMMEDIATELY send you their spreadsheet, so that you can keep track of which letters have been sent.

4. Whenever you fulfill a request for letters through , 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 , 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.

3 Information for Faculty

1. : You presumably already have an account tied to your JHU email address. (If not, you will need one).

   You will need to go to the and click under "Settings" (or maybe "Preferences") to get to the place where you can register a surrogate, which should of course be .

   The student will select you as a writer by using the email address under which you are registered on .

2. **:** Each JHU faculty member sending a recommendation letter will need to have an account at (). Your account is first established by the STUDENT who first requests a letter from you. That student must provide to a valid `@jhu.edu` email address for you. Personal email addresses like those from `gmail` or `yahoo` are now prohibited by for security reasons.

   If you are not yet registered on and a student provides with a valid JHU email address for you inside , that will become your unique email address.

   WARNING: You probably have 4-8 valid email addresses: `[yourname]@jhu.edu, [variant-with-a-number]@jh.edu, [your-name]@johnshopkins.edu, ....` You want to have ONE address known to (otherwise, you may have to log in for each email address multiple times). Even if you have written EJM leters before, a student might try to register you under another address. If so, I STRONGLY advise you to push back and ask the student to use whatever is your already-registered EJM address. (You can check whether you are registered by going to and trying to log in using your best-guess email address.)

   Once you have been registered for 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 ; the email address to use for the proxy is . The good thing about using a proxy is that you (as a faculty member) need only to send your letters out once, to , and everything else is handled for you after that.

3. **:** Each faculty member must register at . After you create an account, you will have to designate as a surrogate to manage your reference letters. The surrogate

name is and the email address is . The faculty need to set as their proxy each year, as this system does not carry their proxies over from year to year.

4. and : Each faculty member should email their reference letters to at . Please follow the file naming convention outlined below. This service will be provided for both JHU Economics and external recommenders.

N.B.: When you send your letters to , 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`.