

RECOMMENDATIONS POLICY

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I am very happy to provide letters of recommendation for students who are applying for jobs, internships, or graduate and professional schools. However, in order to do this, I ask that students adhere to the following guidelines:

1. **See me first.** When you decide you would like me to write a recommendation for you, come to my office hours or make an appointment for an *in-person* discussion about why you are applying for this position and why you feel I would be a useful advocate. While e-mail may be an easier mode of teacher-student communication, I prefer that you come and talk to me directly so that I can get a better sense of your needs (this is particularly true for applications to jobs and internships with which I may not be familiar).

2. **Provide background materials.** The more I know about you, and the program or job for which you are applying, the better. Please provide me with a transcript, resume, and any other personal materials that you feel attest to your suitability for the position. Copies of institutional brochures, application forms, or other background materials will also help me craft a letter that suits the position. If you are requesting a general letter of recommendation to keep on file in a career placement dossier, a transcript and resume are sufficient, although it would be helpful for me to have a personal statement if you have one.

3. **Give me lead time.** *This is the most important requirement.* In order for me to write a recommendation you must talk to me about it and provide all necessary materials at least three weeks prior to the application's mailing deadline. You are asking me to write a letter of recommendation that is a thoughtful, individually tailored reflection on you and your work. This is something I take seriously, and to which I dedicate a certain amount of time. It is not fair to me – nor fair to you – if I have to produce something too quickly.

4. **Think about why you are asking me.** Effective letters of recommendation come from professors and supervisors who know you and your work very well, and with whom you are confident you have high standing. You want recommendation letters that set you apart from the crowd, that attest to your individual talents and your future potential. When considering who to ask for a recommendation, think about the feedback you have received from this professor or supervisor, and the substance of your work with them. Can they attest to your strengths in an area that is particularly important to the job or program to which you are applying? Do they know you well enough (or know your writing and scholarship well enough) to write an enthusiastic and individualized letter of reference? You do not have to have visited me every week in

office hours, nor even had me in a small seminar, for the answers to these questions to be “yes.” But if you feel that others may know your talents and experience better, or have taught you subjects more relevant to your application, you may want to consider asking them instead. I will not agree to write a letter of recommendation unless I feel I can provide a high level of specificity and enthusiasm about your work.

