



## Department of Romance Languages

### Guidelines for Requesting Letters of Recommendation from Faculty

During your undergraduate and graduate career, you will need a number of letters of recommendation for everything from graduate school applications to scholarships and fellowships to job applications. In order to help your professors write you the best letters possible and complete them in a timely way, please follow these guidelines:

#### **Identify your letter writers with plenty of time in advance of deadlines (1 month or more).**

Generally, this will be your primary adviser and a committee member with whom you've worked closely, or professors with whom you've taken at least one class and who know your work well.

Your first step should be to ask them if they are willing to write you a letter. This request can take place over email or in person (during office hours, for example). Explain the opportunity for which you are requesting a letter at this time.

Ask for recommendations from faculty who know you well. A teacher who has worked with you for a full term or more can say much more about your work than one who has known you for three weeks or less.

It is important to ask your letter writers whether they feel comfortable writing a strong letter on your behalf.

There are times when a given professor who does know you well and would likely be able to write a strong letter on your behalf may not be able to oblige due to momentary personal or professional constraints. If this is the case, simply ask another professor on your list.

**Once your letter writers have agreed to write for you, you should send a follow-up email with all the necessary materials for the application 2-4 weeks in advance, depending on how involved the letter must be.**

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Smaller in-house scholarships are usually fine with 2 weeks of notice; job applications and bigger fellowships require at least 1 month of notice. You should include at this time:

- a. Your proposal, personal statement, or application in as close to its final form as possible. **If your proposal is not ready to send to your recommenders 2-4 weeks in advance, you are not ready to apply this time.**
- b. Your CV
- c. Your dissertation abstract (depending on the phase of your study)
- d. A narrative of your dissertation progress identifying which chapters are complete, which are underway and how far along they are, etc. (depending on the phase of your study)
- e. A reminder of which courses you took with the professor and the topic of your final paper or project (depending on the phase of your study)
- f. A research agenda and timeline (depending on the application- e.g. for summer research applications)

Your professors may have recommendations or suggestions for your application or proposal. By providing your materials as early as possible, you put yourself in the best possible situation to make use of these recommendations before final submission. Your professors may also have follow-up questions or request additional materials (final papers, dissertation chapters, etc.). You should be prepared to respond to these requests right away to give your letter writers time to incorporate the necessary information.

**If you have several deadlines close together (for example, spring fellowship application season; fall graduate school application season), please send ONE email with a list of applications and deadlines.**

**Please include in your email with your materials the necessary information for how the recommender should submit their letter.** Should it be emailed? To what address? Is there an application website? Should the recommender expect an automatically-generated email with a link?

Please be aware that automatically generated emails often do NOT include all the information recommenders need (for example, the deadline and whom the recommendation is for). Therefore, you need to provide this information in one place to make it as easy for your recommenders as possible.

This may mean you need to start the online applications several weeks in advance. You cannot expect to be able to send automatically generated requests/ links at the last minute and hope your professors can respond to them right away. These should be sent at about the same time as you send your materials and deadlines to your professors (2-4 weeks in advance), only once your recommenders have agreed to write for you.

**You are welcome to send a polite reminder several days in advance of the deadlines**, and in fact, many of us appreciate the reminder! This helps keep your letters on your recommenders' minds, and gives them enough time to finish their letters before they are due.

**Be aware:**

Please do not request more letters than you need for the application. If your professors agree to write for you and you provide the materials in a timely manner, you can and should expect that they will complete the work. It takes time and effort to write a strong letter.

Please do not send a mass email to multiple professors to request letters. Your request should be individual so you can take the time to explain the opportunity you are applying for and remind your professors of how and when you have worked with them (particularly relevant if it has been a year or two since you have seen them or taken a class with them).